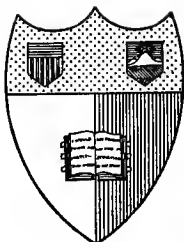


# THE MAKING OF JANE



SARAH BARNWELL ELLIOTT



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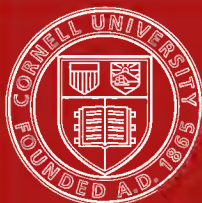
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# THE MAKING OF JANE





# THE MAKING OF JANE

*A NOVEL*

BY

SARAH BARNWELL ELLIOTT

AUTHOR OF "JERRY," "THE DURKET SPERRET,"  
"AN INCIDENT AND OTHER HAPPENINGS," ETC.

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS  
NEW YORK ::::::::::::::: 1901

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TO  
M. J. P. C.



# The Making of Jane

## I

“ When ye stood up in the house  
    With your little childish feet,  
And in touching Life’s first shows,  
    First the touch of Love did meet—  
Love and nearness seeming one,  
    By the heart-light cast before,  
And of all Beloveds, none  
    Standing farther than the door—”

**I**T was a large room, a nursery; it was wainscoted, and the wainscoting was painted gray; the wall above it, and the ceiling, were white. Being in a wing of the house, the room had windows to the north, to the south, and to the west; the fourth side was occupied by a door and a fireplace. In front of the fireplace there was a tall wire fender painted green, with brass knobs at stated intervals on the top. The carpet showed rich and warm in occasional spots in the far corners, but everywhere else it had been worn down to a uniform gray. There were two old-fashioned trundle-beds in the room, and a high crib of antique shape. There were high chairs and little chairs; an old chest of drawers with glass knobs; a washstand too tall for the children to reach, and a cane-bottomed

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rocking-chair, large and battered. Everything in the room was more or less battered, yet it had a beauty of its own.

It was a winter evening, gray and misty, with a fine rain falling. A sad, desolate evening such as come only in Southern countries when the sun is gone and there is no crispness in the air. A fire burned in the big fireplace, a ruddy bank of logs that was slowly turning into coals where all the shades of red and purple glowed and thin blue flames crept in and out about the fiery mass. A fire that struck a strong light up against the high white ceiling, and cast dark shadows in the far corners, and made the face of the black woman rocking a snow-flake of a baby in the big chair, to shine. Some children, like little steps, the youngest just walking, played about on the floor with many miscellaneous articles. Pine-burrs, shells, some old chess-men, some home-made cloth dolls, strings of empty spools which they sometimes put as crowns on their curly heads, and some hoary blocks worn cornerless with use. They were speaking in stage whispers now, and tipping about on their little toes, for the nurse was rocking the baby to sleep, singing a melancholy "Spiritual"—

" In dat day—in dat day,  
When you see de Lawd a-comin'  
In dat day—in dat da-y-y ! "

And as she rocked the old chair creaked and groaned.

But presently the eldest child stepped on a block that turned, she plunged forward upsetting the brother, tumbling him against the little sister who, being by

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no means firm on her legs, sat down very hard. Immediately her head was thrown back, her eyes were shut tight, her mouth fell open and a shrill cry was emitted that rent the air. The baby started wide awake and the nurse sat up straight in her chair.

"Now, Miss Janey!" she cried, "what is you doin'? I dis gitten dis baby to sleep, en you is done wake um up. Git up, Mass Jimmy, doan you cry, you is boy. Come yer, Miss Mayon; come yer, my chile, an tell yo' mawmer wey hot you."

"Det up, Ma'on," the little boy pleaded, putting one short arm round his sister's neck in a way that bid fair to strangle her, but Marion did not stir. She seemed to be pleased with her present importance and continued to wail aloud, with closed eyes from which no tear came.

"Now, Miss Janey, you see what you is do," the nurse went on, "meckin' Miss Mayon st'at wid dat dry cry, en you know say nobody kin stop um."

"I tripped on a block," Janey explained. "Come, Marion," she went on, "take my doll, my new doll," forcing the least defaced of the effigies into the arms of the little wailer. "It's my new doll, Marion, open your eyes; the one with the pink frock."

"Teck yo' sister doll, my chile," the nurse chimed in, and now she turned the baby down on his stomach across her knees, and began a joggling, rocking motion that seemed as though it must wring his head off, instead, one fist crept into his mouth, and he fixed his eyes on the fire with a wide, unwinking stare of contentment.

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"Get up, Marion," Janey went on, "here's my little chair by the fire, and here's my doll; come on."

This last suggestion seemed potent, and Marion opened her eyes. Janey helped her to her feet, and grasping Janey's doll closely, she marched to the chair that was hastily put in place for her, and sat down smiling in a superior manner.

"Now dat's right," the nurse commented. "En, Miss Janey, you en' Mass Jimmy muss keep quiet, kase I blegged to git dis baby to sleep; I cahn set yer tell mawnin." Then the baby having been joggled into renewed weariness, the chair once more began to groan and creak in a regular cadence; the melancholy song was resumed—"In dat day—in dat da-y-y," and Jim and Janey tipped softly on from block to block. Slippery stepping-stones these were, over a deep and dreadful torrent, and a terrible lion lurking in the farthest, darkest corner, was slowly creeping after them! How horrible was their peril, how they trembled, how their eyes grew big with excitement!

The evening darkened; the firelight became more pronounced; the monotonous song went on and on in the warm, red gloom; Marion was sound asleep in her little chair, and Janey and Jim were almost safe on the shore of the farthest trundle-bed, when the door opened softly and the mother came in. By nursery magic the first turn of the door-knob banished the lion and the flood, and the children ran safely to meet the visitor. She came to bring these elder ones down to supper.

"And you must be very good," she whispered, "for your cousin Henry, who sends you such beautiful pres-



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ents every Christmas, has just arrived ; he came on the train, and will be here only for to-night, so you must be very good indeed."

"Oh, mother!" they whispered, just as excited as when crossing the torrent.

"Yes, and he wants Janey to go away with him," looking down into the child's wide-opened eyes that seemed to catch a gleam from the fire. Jim's face fell. "I want to go too," he said.

"Father's only big boy?" the mother asked. "If Janey goes you'll be the oldest one at home to help us. Marion and Tom are only little babies, you know."

"And you'll let me go?" Janey queried breathlessly; "for how long, mother?"

The mother sighed. "I don't know, dear," she said; "they want you for a long time. Cousin Henry and Cousin Jane have no little children."

The child clung to her in a sudden terror. "But I'll be your child all the time?" she pleaded.

"Of course, always, all the time, and you need not go unless you wish." Then they went away, and as Janey softly closed the door, the melancholy song began again and the creaking of the chair, and her eyes were filled with the slumberous red gloom of the battered old nursery.

## II

"Dear Heaven, how silly are the things that live  
In thickets, and eat berries! I, also,  
A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought to her cage,  
And she was there to meet me. Very kind.  
Bring the clean water; give out the fresh seed."

IT was a long journey, first into the sleepy old city where they had lunch, and where the maid at the hotel remarked that Jane's hat was very old-fashioned to be travelling with such a rich gentleman. Then the gaudy sleeping-car that was to be their abiding place for the rest of the journey. Here Jane took her hat off. She looked at it critically. It was her very best hat, the one that had been kept in her mother's wardrobe, and put on only on Sundays when there happened to be service within reach of the plantation. Then her father would drive them over, and all the negroes would be there, and the few white people who sat in the front benches. Such hard benches! Her best hat that still had about it a faint smell of dead rose-leaves. Her mother's wardrobe always smelled of dead rose-leaves.

"Old-fashioned," a "rich gentleman." She glanced at her cousin. He looked quite different from her father. He was fatter, he was younger; his eyes were fat; his face was shiny, and there were no creases in his clothes, none anywhere; his shoes, too, were differ-

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ent. A rich gentleman. She turned very red when her cousin caught her looking at him, and in her confusion dropped her hat. Mr. Saunders picked it up. "What are you thinking?" he asked.

"The servant said that my hat was old-fashioned, and that you were a rich gentleman."

"So?" and he smiled kindly. "You shall have a new hat just as soon as we get to New York."

"This is my best hat."

"Now you shall have a better."

She took the hat. She did not know that the ribbon had been washed and ironed, she did not know that the extreme glistening quality of the uneven blackness of the straw was due to shoe-polish, she only knew that with breathless interest she had watched her mother trim it, had stood at her mother's knee until it was finished, and had laughed with delight when it was put on her head, and her mother had kissed her, and she had gone proudly about the big old house seeking commendation. She smoothed the bows; the smell of the dead rose-leaves came to her again; she could see the big doors of the shining old wardrobe swing open, could see the many drawers with their brass handles, the piles of clothing and small boxes on the various shelves, the very folds of her mother's dresses hanging in the side compartments moved before her eyes. She spoke suddenly. "I don't want a new hat," she said.

Mr. Saunders, roused from his paper, again smiled kindly. "Oh! why, yes, with roses on it and feathers, yes, and ribbons, wide ribbons."

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Jane looked at him solemnly, then went back to the smoothing of the bows and he to his newspaper.

It was a long, long journey, and at the end her little jacket was scarcely warm enough. Other little girls had come into the car, and with newly awakened views as to hats, Jane looked at theirs critically, then at her own. Gradually she began to be sorry for her hat, then for her jacket, then she found herself sitting with her feet tucked away, though encased in her best shoes, and wondering why her frock was so long.

The second night she cried herself to sleep, and on the big crowded boat that took her over the great water at the end of the journey, she felt herself alone in all the world and different. Her heart swelled within her, and she did not dare to speak. The streets dazed her, and the rush and turmoil made her feel afraid. Then the house was so still, and Cousin Jane was so tall! She clung to Mr. Saunders, he had been good to her, he had been in her own home. Cousin Jane was beautiful; her eyes were shining and her cheeks were red; yes, and her clothes were like the clothes in a picture-book; trailing like the princess in the fairy tales, but yet she was like a great big room at night and no light in it. The child clung to Mr. Saunders, got behind him, but Cousin Jane drew her away. Such white hands, such large hands she had, and they were so hard. She was kissed, then her hat was taken off and handed to the maid, her jacket followed.

"Put them in the parish closet," Mrs. Saunders said, then, "How old are you, Jane?"

"Seven years on my birthday." Her voice broke.

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and she hid her face in her little hands. The last birthday was the one that she remembered, and on that day there had been a large ginger-cake and some molasses candy, and her mother had made her a new doll, the one with the pink calico frock on.

"You must not cry," Mrs. Saunders said. "You must be good; where is your handkerchief?"

"I lost it."

Then her eyes were wiped with the softest handkerchief she had ever felt, and she and the handkerchief were both given over to a woman in a white cap and apron.

"She must be bathed and dressed at once," Mrs. Saunders ordered, "and her hair must be washed also, and carefully brushed. She has had her breakfast, Henry?" turning to Mr. Saunders, who was leaving the room.

"Of course."

"Then," to the maid, "you will tell Simmons that Miss Jane's luncheon is to be served in the nursery at twelve o'clock."

It was a large luxurious room in blue and white. Curtains, carpet, furniture, china, all in blue and white. A little book-shelf full of books, a doll-house comfortably furnished, with a family of well-dressed dolls seated in state; a small rocking-chair, a low work-table with a little basket on it. There were other playthings too, and in a corner Jane's trunk, which had come with them on the cab.

The child was bewildered until she caught sight of the trunk, then her wonder centred around that. How

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small it looked, and how strange. What had happened to it, was it her trunk? She went close to it. Yes, there was "*Ormonde*" on the end, which she had spelled out so proudly for Jim's benefit. What was the matter that it looked so small and old? The maid had been given the key, and without more ado she proceeded to open it, to toss the things out on the floor. At first she had looked at them critically, with one or two grunts, but only for a moment, then out everything came, carelessly, recklessly. The watching child seemed to see her mother's slim white hands as they had folded and smoothed each thing into its place. She was afraid to speak. At the bottom she saw a box, she saw her cloth doll with the pink frock.

"There!" she cried, and seized one in each hand.

"Stop!"

Jane's answer was to put the things in the low rocking-chair and sit on them. The woman looked from where she kneeled by the trunk, and laughed. "You are a crazy little piece," she said. "I don't want your old things; they'll all go into the parish closet, I guess."

"With my best hat?"

"With all you've brought."

"What is that closet?"

The woman was sitting back on her heels now, putting the different kinds of garments into separate piles. "That closet is where Mrs. Saunders puts all the things she's done with, to give to the poor."

"All my clothes?"

"She'll give you new ones."

The child's eyes grew big with astonishment. She

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forgot the discomfort she was suffering of sitting on the hard box and the soft doll. Her mother was going farther and farther away from her. What should she do! She could not write; her cousin would not take her back again. The world was an aching void, her life was desolate, and again she put her face down in her little hands and wept.

"That's no good," the maid went on, "you'll get better ones."

"Mother made them."

"'Cause she had to; she'll be glad for you to have new ones, fine ones. Come, stop crying, Mrs. Saunders won't like it."

"Cousin Jane?"

"Yes, I'm going to fix your bath now; unbutton your clothes."

Left alone, the child wiped her eyes on her sleeve. She must save something from that dreadful closet. The woman would hear her if she opened a drawer, she could save only the box and the doll! She looked about like a hunted creature, then the doll was thrust into the doll-house and the doors were shut, and the box was shoved under the dressing-table, in the middle, far back against the wall. Her hands were trembling so that they would scarcely do their office, but she had a reasonable amount of clothing off before the maid returned. It was a tremendous scouring the little pink body was subjected to, and the tangles of her curly hair seemed endless. Her lunch was lonely, too; she was lonelier still when the maid went down for her food, but the afternoon made ample amends in the

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shape of company. She was taken down to Mrs. Saunders's dressing-room, where there were piles of boxes arriving, where garment after garment was tried on. She did not realize the fineness of them; she was simply a doll that Mrs. Saunders and the maid were dressing and undressing, and discussing. Later the snow began to fall. She had read of it, had seen pictures of it; it was strange, it was dreadful, it would cover all the world, it would shut her far-off home away from her entirely!

Arrayed at last in everything new, she was left by the window, where she could watch this mysterious snow. All the street was wet at first, and black, then a little whiteness began to appear. It would be hopeless when all was covered. She had a frantic longing to rush away, down to the boat, to the train, away to her home before the snow blocked all the roads. She looked over her shoulder. Mrs. Saunders's desk, where Mrs. Saunders was writing, was between her and the door. She turned back to the window, but she could not see. She drew her sleeve across her eyes.

"Jane!"

She started violently.

"There is a handkerchief in your pocket. You'll ruin your new dress."

She found her handkerchief, but the tears had gone. She could now see every snow-flake as it fell.

"That's a very untidy habit you have," Mrs. Saunders went on; "you've done it twice already, and why are you crying? I've just bought you a quantity of new clothes."



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"The snow will cover the world."

"But not you." Mrs. Saunders was standing beside her now.

"And all the roads, and all the engines and cars."

"Your travelling is done."

There was use for the little handkerchief now, but Jane's maid had come in, and Mrs. Saunders's attention was diverted. "Have you finished?" she asked.

"Yes, Mrs. Saunders."

"Then take Miss Jane to her room. Hereafter she will breakfast down-stairs, and have her luncheon with us also. Her dinner will be served in the nursery. Each day after dinner, unless there are guests, she will come down-stairs for a little while. Kiss me, Jane; now go and play with your dolls, read your story-books, and later you will come down again. Make the best of your holiday, for your lessons will begin immediately."

It was a long, long afternoon, the only happy moment being when the maid leaving her for a little while, she looked under the dressing-table and saw that her box was safe, opened the doll-house and gave the de-faced cloth effigy a strangling hug.

The lights and flowers, Mrs. Saunders's brilliant dress and bare shoulders dazzled her when later on she was led into the dining-room. Her chair was placed next to Mr. Saunders, who drew her closer, patted her gently, and put chocolates on her plate. She could not swallow, but she managed to say "Thank you" with a look it took him long to forget. Then they went away in a carriage, and she, up to her bed.

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The light was turned low, the maid went out, closing the door ; she would be back presently, she said. The child waited ; the maid would be down all those long steps by this time. The covering was thrown off, the little bare feet sped across the floor, in a moment she was back again, covered and hidden, with the old doll safe in her arms.

### III

“Children’s voices should be dear  
(Call once more) to a mother’s ear ;  
Children’s voices wild with pain—”

“JANE!”

The sudden cessation of screams and scolding seemed to leave a vacuum in the room, and the dishevelled maid and the infuriated child seemed fixed in their places.

“What is it all about?”

“It’s about a dirty old rag doll,” the maid answered.

“It was a disgrace——”

“You story!” the child flared up.

“Jane!”

“And I threw it into the dust-barrel.”

The child covered her face with her little hands and sobbed as if her heart would break. “Mother made it—mother made it!” she wailed.

“And did you for that reason get into this fury? And look at Fanny’s apron; you have torn it to ribbons, a new apron. I am ashamed of you; I am very angry; come with me.”

“She bit me, too.” And the maid showed some red spots on her hand.

“Come.” And the child followed Mrs. Saunders from the room.

The new experiences, the crowding sensations, the

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governess, the meting out of all time into sections which were all occupied, even to playing at stated hours, had made the days seem endless to the child. From her own stand-point, if she had been able to put it into words, she would have said that she had been hurried and harried, had been tormented, and withal had tried to be good. She liked the dancing-school where the teacher praised her. She liked the gymnasium that reminded her of climbing trees, of swinging from the grape-vines, and of dropping suddenly to the infinite terror of her old nurse. But the lessons, those everlasting lessons, were weariness and pain. French and German—French and German, and thumping on a piano, when the only thing she wanted to learn was to write. To write to her father and mother. And she was weary of the dressing and undressing, of the stupid walks. Yet, of what use were play hours to her? She would sit on the floor in front of the doll-house and look at it. Not one article of furniture had been moved, not one member of that orderly family had ever been out of place. They were strangers, while the old, battered, smirched image of cloth was held close in her arms. She had not taken root, she would not fit into her environment. She held aloof, declaring to herself that some day she would go, some day when she could write to her father to come for her. Her trunk was gone, and her clothes, but so much the quicker her father could pick her up and run with her, and her mother would make her some more clothes. The old doll knew all about it, and would go too.

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She had, also, lost some of her awe of her surroundings, of the governess, of the maid, they who hurried and harried her, and sometimes she would turn in impotent fury and try to wreak her little vengeance, which outbreaks were all duly reported. Still Mrs. Saunders declared that the child was undemonstrative. Downstairs she was as still as it was possible to be, and Mr. Saunders was troubled. But now a climax had arrived. By chance Mrs. Saunders had come on the scene when the greatest of all the battles was being fought, when the struggle was going hopelessly against the child, when the maid could show rags and wounds, and the child seemed to have no cause. A climax when Mrs. Saunders, once for all, would arbitrate.

Downstairs into the library they marched, and the door was shut. "Sit there." And while the child edged on to one of the tall chairs, Mrs. Saunders took her seat near the table.

"I am sorry to tell you, Jane," she began, "that I am finding you to be a very troublesome little child; and if I were not sorry for your father and mother, I would send you home at once."

The child sobbed a little.

"Hush! I cannot have any crying; I cannot stand it. I have given you a number of beautiful dolls, your Cousin Henry has given you a beautiful doll-house; you have everything that a child can possibly want, and yet, because the maid throws away a dirty old rag doll, which, as she says, was a disgrace to your room, you fly into a fury and bite and scratch like a little cat."

"Mother made it!" the child cried.

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"Yes, and she made all of your clothes; but I have given them away."

"And I cried then," the child insisted.

"And should have been punished then. Now, however, you must hear the truth and try to realize certain things. First, that what did for you at home, will not do for you here, and that I cannot have my house littered up with things that are unsuitable; second, that I am finding you to be very bad-tempered. I have just received a letter from your mother, and in it there is a letter for you. I took it in to read to you, and found you fighting the maid. As a punishment, you shall not hear it all, but only this little bit; listen—'And, little daughter,' " she read, "'you must be very gentle and very obedient, and always remember how good your cousins are to give you such beautiful things, and to have teachers for you, and to take care of you. If you wish to make your mother happy, you must be gentle and obedient.'"

The child's head drooped.

"It would have broken her heart to have seen you just now," Mrs. Saunders went on. "I have taken you because your father and mother are too poor——"

The child looked up quickly. "We've got a big house, and a big plantation," she interrupted, fiercely, "and servants, and a plenty to eat!"

"But your mother could not send you to school," Mrs. Saunders went on, "and your little brothers and sisters will not have all that you have. When you are older you will understand that your father and mother struggle very hard to provide for their children, and

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to help them I have taken you off their hands. I should not have told you this if you had not driven me to it by your bad behavior ; but I see that you must be made to understand your position, and what I am trying to do for you. I wish to educate you and bring you up as a lady should be brought up, and how do you reward me? By being so bad that I can scarcely keep a maid for you. I am very angry, and if you had any money, I should make you pay Fanny for her apron ; it would make you remember."

"I have some money." And the little head went up proudly.

"Where is it?"

"In my drawer—in my work-box."

"Show it to me."

The child slipped down from her chair, and Mrs. Saunders followed her up-stairs into the room where Fanny, who was straightening the things disarranged by the recent fray, paused in her work to watch developments. The child opened the top drawer, and, running her little hand down under everything, even under the white paper that covered the bottom of the drawer, she pulled out a small key. She kneeled down on the floor, and from away back under the dressing-table she drew forth the painted little wooden box, so long hidden. Her hands were trembling so that the contents of the box rattled, and hastily, as if fearing the failure of her courage, she unlocked the box, and, opening it, a spool of thread, a little thimble, a paper of needles, a pair of scissors, a new cake of soap, still in wrappings, and a silver dollar were discovered. She paused a

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moment, as if to gather up her self-control; it was as if she were taking the coverings from off her heart, and putting it out bare and quivering for the wind to blow on; then, without raising her head, she took the coin and held it up to Mrs. Saunders.

"No, you must give it to Fanny yourself, and ask her pardon."

There was a pause, and the upraised little hand did not move.

"You must obey me, or I must write and tell your poor mother how bad you are, and how disobedient. It will almost break her heart."

A second longer the child waited, then, putting the box down on the floor, she got up and walked toward the maid, but without looking at her.

"I don't want your money," the woman said.

"I wish you to take it," Mrs. Saunders ordered. "Jane has torn your apron and I wish her to replace it, even though I provide your aprons. I wish her to remember, and to learn to control her temper. Now say 'I'm sorry, Fanny.'"

The child put the money into the woman's hand, but did not say the words.

"Say 'I'm sorry, Fanny,'" Mrs. Saunders repeated. Instead, the child turned and took the box from the floor.

"Give it to me." And Mrs. Saunders's hand closed on it. "I don't wish you to keep things locked up and hidden," she went on, "and you do not need this soap." She put the box on the dressing-table, threw the key into the waste-basket, and handed the soap to the maid.



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"Scented soap is not good for a child's skin; take it, Fanny, and go. Have you anything else hidden?"

Jane shook her head.

"Who gave you that soap?"

"Mother."

"Who gave you that money?"

"Father."

"Have you any more?"

"No, ma'am."

"Don't say 'ma'am,' that is like a servant; say 'No, cousin.'"

"No, cousin."

"Will you tell Fanny that you are sorry?"

There was a moment's pause, then the child broke out with, "I'm not sorry—I never will be sorry! I hate her!" And throwing her hands up in a wild gesture of despair, she cast herself on the floor. "I hate everybody!" she cried; "and I want to go home—I want to go home!" Mrs. Saunders let the paroxysm pass, then, lifting the child, seated her well back in an arm-chair. "I shall leave you here until I come back; and stop wiping your eyes on your sleeve. Where is your handkerchief? But wait." And crossing to the wash-stand, she wet a sponge and wiped the child's tear-stained face and dried it with a towel. "You must stay here until you are a better child," she said; and regulating the heat, she went out, closing the door behind her.

She went too fast, perhaps, to hear the child's sobs—her room was too far away, perhaps, to hear them, the deep, hopeless sobs that went on and on as if they would

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never stop. Terrible sobs to come from the heart of a little child. The miseries of her present life had culminated. All the things she had borne, all the lessons she hated, all the lonely dinners, all the stupid walks, all Fanny's allusions to her clothes in the parish closet, all the careless laughter at her different ways and training—all seemed now to roll back on her; now when her only confidant, her only companion had been thrown into the dust-barrel; now when her box, so carefully hidden, so watchfully removed on "sweeping days," had been overhauled. For in revealing her secret treasures she had practically lost them. The sweet soap her mother had given her had been scorned; the money her father had slipped into her hand at parting was gone; the old doll, playing with which she could imagine that Jim or Marion would soon come in; the doll that could remember the nursery, and the red fire, and the chair that creaked and groaned, had been cast away!

And her father and mother were poor, had given her away because they were poor; maybe even now they were wanting that very dollar; maybe they had given her their last money; oh, if only she could go back to see for herself! And she could not write, she could not tell them anything but what her cousin would, she could not hear anything but what her cousin chose to read.

"Oh, mother, mother!" she wailed; then the sobs went on and on. Weaker after awhile, and fainter as the day darkened down into the sudden wan, snowy winter darkness. Slower and slower, until the curly

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head drooped sidewise, and the heavy eyelids closed. Asleep, with the long, sobbing breaths still coming at intervals, the last echoes of the storm.

But the tear-stained, troubled little face grew calmer presently, then a smile parted the lips. Perhaps she was back in the battered old nursery playing in the red fire-lighted dusk; perhaps the monotonously creaking chair and the melancholy song were soothing her—"In dat day—in dat da-y-y." Perhaps her mother would come in presently and say: "My little daughter, your cousins want you to go away with them." But no, that would have wakened her.

## IV

“ I lived on and on,  
As if my heart were kept beneath a glass  
And everybody stood, all eyes and ears,  
To see and hear it tick.”

FANNY repented before the next day, but it was too late. She tried to return the dollar, but Jane pushed it away coldly. She would not any more talk to the woman, nor had she any words for the governess. Her lessons were done much better than ever before, she was absolutely quiet under the brushing of her curls, the dressing and undressing, but her instructors said that the spirit had gone out of her dancing and gymnastic exercises, and in her play-time, though she still sat in front of the open doll-house, and though her arms were empty of their battered treasure, she no more than before played with the new dolls.

A great change had come over her, and she was developing at a cruel rate. Poor meant that people had no money. Her father and mother were poor, her father had no money to travel to where she was. She had seen her Cousin Henry pay for the tickets, and he had taken out a great deal of money. Her father could never come for her. And she had no money,

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she could not travel either; she would have to stay where she was. Once the governess, in rebuking her, had said, "Your cousin pays me for teaching you, and you ought to study." Teachers were paid. And Fanny had said: "You are so bad Mrs. Saunders will have to pay me more." Maids were paid. She would learn how to be a maid, she would learn how to be a teacher; she would go out and dress and undress children, would teach children, would be paid money. But she would have to wait, wait so long. And as whatever she loved was taken from her—Fanny had taken her doll, Mrs. Saunders had taken her other things—they should not know any more what she loved, what she was going to do; she would not talk to them.

The weeks went by, and Mrs. Saunders said that she had never seen a child improve as Jane had improved. Mr. Saunders, looking at the child, asked that he instead of the maid might take the child for her walks. He took her down to the shopping district, and he did not stop to converse with policemen, and Jane found this a great improvement; besides, he stopped at the shop-windows and showed her pretty things. He gave her an ice, then some money for candy. The child's face lighted up and her little hand grasped the coin.

"I'll keep it," she said, in an excited whisper.

How strange that a little child should love money, and Mr. Saunders thought much about it. If he had followed her up-stairs, had watched her slip into the nursery noiselessly, so that Fanny might not be at-

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tracted from the next room; had seen with what eagerness and quiet she abstracted a doll's trunk from the doll-house and slipped the money down into the bottom of it, under the clothes of the mother of the family; had seen her lock it, looking cautiously over her shoulder, and hide the key under the corner of the carpet, he would have been more thoughtful still; might have understood retrospectively the pondering silence of the child during the walk home when she was laying her little plans for concealment; was reflecting that Fanny locked up the doll-house on sweeping-days, that the carpet was nailed to the floor. If he had known how much more restful her sleep was that night, soothed by the thought that she had begun to save money, he would have crowded her little hands with money. But he was satisfied that he had, for a moment at least, taken from her eyes the look that had come there since her improvement had begun to be talked about. A look that troubled him at odd times when he was not especially occupied or interested, a look that made him ask in what way the child had improved. She was yielding to treatment, his wife answered, she was far more diligent, far more happy, having at last begun to dust her doll-house, to pack and unpack the little trunks.

Fanny, however, gave warning. The cold, unbroken silence of the child, her reserved dignity was too much for the woman. Charm she never so wisely, the child did not once relax. When Mrs. Saunders questioned the woman there was found no ground for complaint. The child was good now, was obedient,

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but the place did not suit and Fanny packed up. At the last she stepped into the nursery. "Good-by," she said.

"Good-by," Jane answered, but did not turn her head.

"I didn't keep your dollar," Fanny went on; "I put it in the poor-box long ago, where it will help orphan children."

Jane continued to dust the doll-house.

"Won't you shake hands with me?"

The child turned and looked at her. There was a stately poise in the little figure and an infinite contempt in the pose of the head. "You knew that I loved my poor old doll," she said.

Mr. Saunders, meanwhile, did not forget the light that had come into Jane's face when he had given her the money, and he tried the experiment again. Candy, nor dolls, nor toys brought anything but quiet thanks, lady-like little words that she had been taught to say, but the smallest piece of money made her eyes shine and the color come into her cheeks. He could not understand it; a boy he could have comprehended perfectly, but female creatures were strange; his wife, this child were problems. Since it pleased her, however, "candy-money" became a regular thing between them; quietly pressed into the little hand at odd times, while he watched the light that came into her eyes and the color that sprang to her cheeks.

One day in the late spring Mrs. Saunders got a letter. Jane was with her when she read it. There was an exclamation of impatience, the letter was torn

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up instantly, and Jane was sent to her nursery. The next thing they were on their way to Europe. This was the arranged plan for the summer; Mrs. Saunders had only insisted on going a week sooner.

Another great big water between her and her home, and Mr. Saunders found Jane crying. She did not give any very satisfactory answers to his questions, however. She did not like to travel, she said, and would they come back again? Of course, at the end of the summer they would return, and some day they would go down to see her father and mother. Mrs. Saunders had come up behind them. "Not until Jane has proved herself a hard student," she said; "has learned her French and German thoroughly."

Later, Mr. Saunders agreed not to mention going home to the child. "I have spent a great deal on her," his wife declared; "she has just begun to drop her wild, uncivilized ways, and I cannot allow her to go back to where she will pick them all up again. If I am to train this child, and be responsible for her, she must stay in my environment. You wished to help your cousin, and of course this child was named after me in expectation that I would do something for her. I have consented to do it, and in so consenting have acted entirely to please others; am working and spending entirely for the benefit of others. But if you wish to keep Jane, she must be kept on my conditions, and one is that you must not mention her going home again. I insist on this."

In Paris there came a dreadful day. Forwarded letters reached them, and Jane was sent out to walk with



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the maid. "The sooner you tell her the better," Mr. Saunders said, "and here in Paris we can divert her."

"But no mourning," Mrs. Saunders stipulated. "Her outfit is perfectly new, and by next season it will be outgrown — will be out of fashion. I doubt if she knows about mourning. Will you tell her, Henry?"

Mr. Saunders turned away hastily. "Not for the world; I could not stand her eyes."

His wife looked up at him. "Her eyes?"

"Ever since she began to improve her eyes have hurt me like the devil, that's all," then he went away.

"I want you, Jane," Mrs. Saunders said when the child came in. "When you have taken off your things, come here." There was a letter in her hand, and Jane made what haste the maid would permit; the only letters that concerned her came from home.

"I have talked to you a great deal about self-control," Mrs. Saunders began, "about how well-bred people control their tempers and feelings. How it is only common people, servants and the like, who scream and cry aloud. That ladies and gentlemen should bear the pain of death, if necessary, without a sound, and I think that you have heeded; I think that in the six months that you have been with me you have learned a great deal of self-control; you are becoming a well-bred little lady."

"My mother never screams or cries," Jane said.

"And what did she do when you screamed and cried?"

The child's eyes met hers unflinchingly, but the lit-

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the lips were shut tight. Mrs. Saunders's eyes flashed, and the color deepened in her face.

"This is your first impertinence for a long time," she said, coldly, "and on that account I will forgive you; besides, I have something to tell you that will pain you very much, will show if you have really any self-control." She had taken the child's hands and had drawn her close to her knees, and her eyes looked into the child's eyes. "Your brother James——"

"Jim," the child corrected.

"Jim," Mrs. Saunders repeated, "has been very ill; has been suffering, but now he is well again, and has no more pain, because the good God has taken him up to heaven."

There was no answer, and the child's eyes did not move.

"James——"

"Jim," the child corrected once more, her lips seeming to open and shut automatically.

"Jim is dead."

The child did not stir, her eyes still looked unmovedly into Mrs. Saunders's eyes. Death had never come near her before, and she was bewildered. Something had happened to Jim, and the little hands grew icy in Mrs. Saunders's grasp.

"You hear me, Jane?"

"Yes, cousin."

"You understand?"

The child drew her hands away and looked at them. "I don't know," she answered; "may I go now?"

She met Mr. Saunders in the hall, but she hurried

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past him, scarcely pausing while he pressed a little package into her hand. Mrs. Saunders's maid was sitting in the child's room, so the child sat down too. She did not understand; she was in a maze of doubt and misery. It was not that she wished to cry, no, nor scream, but a great weight was on her. Jim had gone; God had taken him. If she should go home now Jim would not be there. Nobody to play with but Marion. What would her mother do; she had called Jim her only big boy. She could not think of the big nursery without Jim; she could not think of anything at home without Jim. She would have liked to ask some questions, but she never spoke to Mrs. Saunders unless she was spoken to. She had always been afraid; she had never lost the sense that Mrs. Saunders was like a big dark room, and at last the main thing was that Jim had gone. A pain came, she did not know where it was, nor what it meant, but it was a pain as if she wanted to cry and could not. She felt in her pocket, yes, she had a handkerchief, so that if she did cry she would not wipe her eyes on her sleeve; but the tears did not come, and the pain stayed.

"I need not have told her," Mrs. Saunders said to her husband; "I do not think that she has the slightest comprehension of the matter; and why should she have; what can death mean to a child like that? If she were at home now, where she could miss him, it would be quite different. It would have been better not to have told her at all. As it was, I did not encourage any expression of feeling on her part; there is a great deal in not making children excitable. I

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hope that I shall have the strength of mind to follow my own judgment in the future; it is stupid to tell children such things."

"If you had not hastened our sailing," Mr. Saunders was reading the letter over, "she could have gone home, as her father begs. A letter before this one must have been lost."

There was a moment's pause, then Mrs. Saunders said: "Sometimes I wonder, I am puzzled to know why I consented to take this child; possibly novelty, certainly duty; but this I do know, that if I am to keep her, I am to have her entirely. If we had heard in time, sending her home would have broken up all my summer plans, and I doubt if the child would have returned to us. Your cousins seem to be hopelessly sentimental, and all that I have spent on the child would have been wasted, which is not to be contemplated patiently. And please remember that I am to answer that letter, even though it is to you. You hate to write letters, and as you did not break the news to the child you cannot tell them how she took it. By the way, I hope Colby will not talk to her about it. Call Colby, will you? She sits in Jane's room. Order a carriage, and after lunch we can take the child to drive."

She need not have been afraid, for Jane had no words for the maid. She sat quite still in the low chair in the proper little way she had been taught, and puzzled, and wondered, and suffered. Colby had twice reminded her that she had a package in her hand, but she had made no answer. She had grown to be very cautious with regard to the packages which her Cousin

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Henry gave her; somewhere in them she was almost sure to find a coin that would be transferred to the doll's trunk which Jane had slipped in among her clothes while Colby was packing. And now, Colby having gone, the child opened the little package. A purse, and in it a yellow coin. She looked at it curiously for a moment, then she closed the door of the room softly, took out the doll's trunk, and proceeded to put all the money into the new purse, feeling very glad because that the little collection was beginning to rattle. The trunk replaced, the momentary interest gone, the thought of Jim came back to her. Gone to Heaven. She went to the window. Heaven was in the sky, but she could see no sky—walls opposite and near, and a deep courtyard.

Lunch was long, the drive was long, the night was long in coming, and even after the night had come her sobs had to be hidden under her pillow. A cloud had come over her inner life, and from this time a change came over her outer life also. It may have been that what Mr. Saunders had said about the child's eyes had opened Mrs. Saunders's own eyes; it may have been that the barely escaped summons for the child to go home had made Mrs. Saunders realize that the child's non-understanding of motives might cause a very unflattering portrait of herself to be drawn; it may have been, as Mrs. Saunders declared that it was, that some remarks of Mrs. Kennet's were really the source of the change; but, whatever it was, something made that day and drive an era in Jane's life.

"Mrs. Kennet saw us out driving," Mrs. Saunders

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reported to her husband, "and this afternoon at Madame Schamoynsky's she asked me all sorts of questions about Jane. She is coming to call on my first afternoon at home, and mainly, I believe, on account of the child. And it does seem queer to have a child with you of whom you say nothing; Mrs. Kennet intimated as much; so I shall have the child with me more. I have always intended bringing her up in this way, but at first she made me uneasy; now, however, that she has learned to speak only when she is spoken to, it will be possible to have her down-stairs—even to take her about in the afternoon. At home, in the winter, of course it will be different, but even there I can have her with me more."

Thus it was that everywhere they went, hiring villas, or ensconced in suites of apartments, moving in the edges of foreign society, or meeting scores of American friends—everywhere, Jane was put on show. Exquisitely dressed, she would be allowed to wander about the reception-rooms until guests appeared, then, "Jane, dearie," and she would be presented, "My little cousin who has come to live with us, or rather my husband's little cousin; but she has come to seem so much my own that I do not always remember that she is not. Here, little Jane, hand this cup of tea." After this would come bon-bons and caresses, holding the child very close against hard whalebones, smoothing her curls, pressing her hands. It had been something of a shock at first; Jane had not understood it, but she had learned to obey implicitly, and did not flinch.

The women to whom all this would be said seemed

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always to the child to look at her in a far-away, questioning manner, with sometimes a smile in their eyes, and Jane made no advances. The men behaved quite differently; they smiled on her kindly, all save old Mr. DeLong, who looked pretty much as the women did; and frequently boxes of bon-bons, for Jane especially, would be presented. Then Mrs. Saunders would, with much eagerness, help the child to open them, and with little exclamations of delight would explain to Jane her good fortune; and the men would be thanked and smiled on, and more caresses would come to Jane.

If Jane did not understand the caresses, however, she did sometimes understand the talk enough to know that Mrs. Saunders was explaining that her father was poor; understood enough to send the blood with a rush to her face that was usually hidden in the falls of lace about Mrs. Saunders's bosom and shoulders.

"The old, old story," Mrs. Saunders would say, "of a large Southern family and an absent income. Plenty of land and ancestors, plenty of mahogany and antiquated books, of pride and sentiment; the story that we so often hear from the South—marrying on faith and bringing up a large family on rice. So we have taken this little one, little Jane, salvage from the family wreck." Once she had been holding Jane's two hands in one of hers as the child sat beside her, gradually drawing them over toward herself, while she talked, talked, talked of Jane's governess, Jane's dancing, Jane's gymnastics. Presently, the hand farthest away from her was dropped, the other was laid down on her lap and held there for a moment, then she patted

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it gently, and took up her cup of tea. Jane had made no reciprocal movement; she had sat quite still, and now was looking at her hand thoughtfully, when, inexplicably, and in the very middle of Mrs. Saunders's declaration that she and Jane were great chums, the old lady who was calling, laughed. "It is your own hand, child," she said; "take it back if you want to."

Jane looked up quickly, the color rose in Mrs. Saunders's face, but she smiled, and repeated: "Quite chums, dear Miss Witting," and patted the unmoved hand once more.

Jane had no explanation for this new state of things, but she soon became accustomed to it—to the insinuations concerning her father's poverty, to bon-bons and ices, to watching people's faces and forming judgments about them and their clothes, to trying to follow them when suddenly they would drop into French or German, and even to hearing people say: "Dear Mrs. Saunders, how unselfish to take into your life such a care, such a responsibility; but then you are always so very, very good." The first time Jane had turned and looked up at Mrs. Saunders, who was shaking her head deprecatingly and smiling almost sadly. She had never before thought of Mrs. Saunders as good, and presently, Mrs. Saunders, seeing her expression, had sent her away to play.

It was a strange life to the child, and she drew some odd, unvarnished conclusions which it would never have done to repeat. She wondered, too, over the dearth of home letters, and at the smallness of the bits that were read to her. In return she was allowed



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to dictate letters under Mrs. Saunders's instructions. "Dear Mother and Father:" these letters would begin, then pause.

"Tell them what a beautiful house you are living in."

"We are living in a beautiful house now——"

"With marble floors," suggested Mrs. Saunders, "called a villa."

"With marble floors, and cousin calls it a villa——"

"Think of something yourself now."

"I don't like French——"

"That is not pleasant; you who are having such a delightful time should tell them all the happy things. Their lives are so dull, and they are so poor, and work so hard, that you should not trouble them with your little tempers. You should like your education; you should be as thankful as your mother and father are for the things I am doing for you. You ought to like French. Now tell them something pleasant. If you want to make them happy, tell them that you are happy, that you like to be with your Cousin Henry."

"Cousin Henry gives me dolls——"

"And what do I give you?"

"—and cousin gives me bon-bons and cakes in the afternoons, and I dress very fine, and see all the company——"

"JANEY."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"Yes, cousin."

"Won't you send your love to anyone?"

The child shook her head; then Mrs. Saunders wrote: "I am so happy—your loving child—Janey."

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These letters were all her intercourse with her home; beyond this she never mentioned her parents, never told of what her life had been, and since the day when the news of his death came she had never alluded to Jim. Very vividly he had been with her for a while, then gradually he had receded from her life, but not any more than Marion had done, or Tom. She had ceased to cry for her mother, reasoning that her mother and father had sent her to Mrs. Saunders, and that Mrs. Saunders would not let her go. Children so helpless so soon accept the inevitable, and the present state of things seemed inevitable to Jane, her only protest being that she still put by her bits of money—a blind little effort at something, she did not know what. She was helpless, and, though she did not know it, she was hopeless as well.

Back again to New York and the routine there—lessons, dancing-school, gymnasium. She was being taught everything that a lady should know, all the accomplishments that would set her forth in life; but now, instead of walks with Mr. Saunders on free afternoons, she was taken about with Mrs. Saunders. Weeks went into months, months went into years, many of which were spent abroad. Jane had learned to write at last, but even then her early letters were always overlooked, edited in fact, by Mrs. Saunders, after which Jane made “A fair copy to please her dear mother by her progress,” and before that stage of her correspondence was passed she had been so drilled as to the virtue of pleasant things, had become so habituated to the life about her—to the idea that Mrs. Saun-

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ders owned her, that to stay where she was was her duty—that she never made mention of any desire to return home, expressed no longings, told nothing that she really felt. Sometimes when her father or mother would write as to her paying them a visit, promises would be made readily and pleasantly by Mrs. Saunders, and at first Jane's heart had leaped up, but gradually she came to know that something was sure to intervene. Mr. Saunders's gout, or Mrs. Saunders's system, or Jane's own body, that to the child felt perfectly healthy, would demand baths, or treatment, or a certain climate, and always across the water. She pondered much, but she made no comment; she had come to feel that peace was the most desirable thing in life, and that it was better to leave the veils down over Mrs. Saunders's excuses. Not that she ever worded these conclusions or reasoned them out; she arrived at them by instinct, and the same instinct bade her heed them.

At last school-days were done, and Mrs. Saunders, viewing Jane critically, decided that she was a most successful specimen of young ladyhood. "All her training and all her grooming is showing now," she said to herself, "and next winter she will make a stir. A reception, a series of dinners, and the opera-box will do it," and she felt herself entering on an exciting game where the stakes were high. The summer before all this, however, should be spent at an American watering-place, where the girl would meet young people she would be apt to know again in the winter. This place must be carefully selected, and Jane must be held

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well in hand. Meanwhile they were in Paris, making last purchases for the summer campaign, and in a shop they met an acquaintance whom Jane remembered vividly as the old woman who had bidden her reclaim her own hand. She remembered every line in her face, every gleam in her eyes.

"My dear Miss Witting!"

"My dear Mrs. Saunders!" Then in unison: "Where have you been all these years?"

At lunch Mrs. Saunders said to her husband: "I met old Miss Witting this morning looking a hundred, and travelling with that nephew Mark."

"John Witting's son?"

"Yes; will he inherit, do you think?"

Mr. Saunders shook his head. "Can't say; nobody can say; the old woman is so peculiar and such a skin-flint. She has loads of money, however, and John Witting's son won't be above hanging around to get what he can; that is, if he is like his father."

"She asked me to let her bring him to call," Mrs. Saunders went on.

"Of course, and he may be a nice fellow; the old woman may be taking him around for her own pleasure."

"She is eternally old," Mrs. Saunders declared, "and her head waggles ridiculously. I think she must have a touch of palsy."

The next afternoon Miss Witting came with her nephew, and Mr. Saunders escaping, the quartette sat down, the old woman and the young man, one on each side of the table where Jane was making tea.

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"Well-behaved young people are a great comfort," the old woman began, bobbing her head at Jane, "and you've done well, Mrs. Saunders, to provide yourself with a daughter. Maria Kennet talked to me about this young woman some time ago, and Maria Kennet is very critical."

"Dear Mrs. Kennet has been always deeply interested in Jane, and I'm so glad; a young girl needs friends when she first faces the world."

"So she's coming out?"

"Next winter; yes, at home."

"And what will you do this summer?"

"I have not decided yet, dear Miss Witting. I'm hunting for a place that has all the virtues. I wish Jane to see a little of society before next winter, but not too much. Heretofore she has seen only my friends, now she must be thrown with younger people."

"Why don't you come to Hillside Springs? Most conservative and exclusive; you've been there?"

"Yes, but not for many years."

"I go there," Miss Witting went on, "because of my old friend Mrs. Creswick—she lives there all the year round, you know."

"Dear Mrs. Creswick, she was a great friend of my mother's. She lost her money, did she not?"

"No, oh, no! Much of it is in mines about which there is litigation, that is all; and once that is over she will be richer than ever before, enormously rich. Her grandson, Laurence—you know of him?—lives with her the half of every year, which is quite remarkable, I think, for a young man of great wealth."

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"Most remarkable; lives with her—what a happiness!"

"I did not say entirely, but he is there every summer; another case of well-behaved young people being a great comfort to old people."

"Yes, and Laurence must be very rich."

"Very, my dear, and so steady—almost too quiet to be interesting."

Jane had listened dutifully until the young man on her other side spoke to her. "You are sailing very soon?" he asked.

"Yes." Then the name of the vessel was given, and the discovery made that he also intended taking passage on that very steamer, but would not board her until she reached Queenstown, his aunt intending to go to Ireland. "How very pleasant," he went on, "unless you are ill."

"Never."

"How fortunate."

"In what, Mr. Witting?" and Mrs. Saunders turned toward him.

"In not being ill at sea."

"Yes, she is never ill, while I—poor me—I go to my cabin before the ship stirs, and stay there until she stops. To comfort me, my husband and Jane come down three times a day to say how delightful everything is and what fine appetites they have. But I do myself injustice; it is a comfort to hear of the joy of others, you know that, dear Miss Witting—all of us older ones know it."

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Miss Witting wobbled her head. "Speak for yourself; for me, if I'm uncomfortable, even, I don't care what is happening to the rest of the world."

Mrs. Saunders laughed. "That is the way in which you always speak of yourself, dear Miss Witting; fortunately your friends know better."

The old woman grunted ungraciously, then added: "I don't know when we will sail; I've not made up my mind. I'm going to Ireland first, and as I'm like you, going to bed and staying there all the time, a sea voyage is no joy to me. Besides, it terrifies me. In case of accident some fools might try to save a pretty girl, but an old woman like me, you know, they'd let go to the bottom at once. So I'm terrified from start to finish; take a deck cabin, and live with a life-preserver on. Mark, here, told me I'd feel safe if I had him along, but I did not, and will not."

"And yet I keep her informed of the state of the glass," Mark put in. "I tell her all about the machinery, I explain all about the compartments, and how safe a modern vessel is, and if there is a fog or a storm I sit and hold her hand."

"Oh, Miss Witting, how good he is!" cried Mrs. Saunders.

The old woman grunted as before, then rose to go. "I'm glad to have met you again," she said; "I've often wondered what you had done with your life and with this child—she looked a scared, nervous little thing when I saw her last."

"Thank you for your interest, dear Miss Witting.

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I have tried to do my duty by her, and she has improved, I think. Trials, of course, but—‘In every life some rain must fall,’ you know.”

“Else it would be dead dry,” and the old soul laughed as she cut Mrs. Saunders short.

And Mark was saying quietly to Jane: “Look for us at Queenstown. I must go home; and please come to Hillside.”



## V

“ Young Love lies dreaming ;  
But who shall tell the dream ? ”

JANE wondered a little as to Mark's assurance that she would see him at Queenstown, but she did not speak of it. Miss Witting did not look like a very persuadable person, still he seemed to be quite sure of his plans. The things that had been insinuated about him by her cousins had not been pleasant, but she had learned to discount much. Not that she was particularly interested in Mark Witting, but as his position seemed somewhat analogous to her own, she wondered if he as a man had more power over his earthly providence—if he could persuade his daily bread to change its route or hasten its movements. None of these things had she ever attempted, she had never cared enough. The only thing she had ever tried to do, besides obeying implicitly, had been to save money, and she had not tried that long. Mrs. Saunders had in some way discovered the little arrangement about “candy-money,” and had put a firm foot down on it. An allowance she would permit, but uncounted, indiscriminate gifts of money, teaching the girl wicked extravagance, she would not countenance.

Jane kept the childish hoard, however, and though she had to give a strict and itemized account of every

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cent of her allowance, she sometimes was able to add a little to the coins in the doll's trunk. Mr. Saunders still gave her money on her birthdays, a day late usually, so that when interrogated as to her gifts Jane need not mention it, for if mentioned it would have to be accounted for; if given and concealed, it would be a lesson in indirection; but to let it come in casually, a few days late, solved the problem and gave Mr. Saunders much satisfaction.

She wondered about Mark Witting, and when she saw him and his aunt come on board at Queenstown she quietly discredited all that had been said about him.

"He'll stow away his old lady," and Mr. Saunders laughed a little, "then perhaps he'll come and play with us."

"So you did come after all," Jane said, when, later, Mr. Saunders having gone to the smoking-room, the young man put his chair down close to hers.

"Of course," Mark answered. "I insisted on Russia, aunt immediately set out for Ireland; I declared for the Far East, she at once took passage on this steamer. One must manage people," he went on, "and when they are beyond dark closets and the use of old slippers one has to find other methods. She had agreed that I must come home, and yet this was the only way in which I could make her keep to her own agreement, and of course I could not leave her wandering about by herself. You don't have to manage your old people?"

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"No," and Jane shivered a little—suppose Mrs. Saunders had heard him!

"A petted darling; what a lucky person. Has Mrs. Saunders made any plans for the summer? Will you come to Hillside Springs?"

"I do not know."

"Do you wish to come there?"

"I have not thought about it."

"It is a charming place; quite simple, and yet very smart people, and everything in the way of amusement. You play golf, of course."

"Of course; and tennis, and I dance, and ride, and swim."

"All the trimmings; and yet your cousin said that you had not been thrown with young people."

"Cousin Henry is young enough; for the rest, I have been taught."

"Dancing-school, gymnasium, swimming-pool—a careful product."

"Yes."

He laughed a little. "And what do you think of life?"

"I have not thought of it."

"Have accepted it just as it came to you? Have you never struck out for yourself, never rebelled?"

"Why should I?"

He drew his hand down over his mustache and close-clipped, pointed beard, then asked: "May I see what you are reading?"

Jane handed him the book, which he turned over slowly, reading here and there, then closed it over his

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finger. "I must seem very ill-bred," he said, "asking so many personal questions; and please forgive me, but I have heard so much about you, and you are so different from any girl I've ever met. You seem never to have done anything, never to have tried to do anything."

"I have studied very hard."

"And of course your reading has been selected."

"I suppose so."

"Then I may not offer any of my books."

"I am interested in my own books."

Mark returned the volume to her. "I am almost tempted to ask your age," he said.

"Nineteen," she answered, frankly.

"I was expecting to hear fifteen."

"No one comes out so young as that."

"I remember; you are coming out this winter."

"A little bit this summer, too."

"Do you feel anxious about it?"

"No."

"You are indeed a careful product. Have you ever been out of Mrs. Saunders's sight?"

"I am out of it now."

"Very good," and Mark laughed a little; then—

"Please tell me what in all the world you'd rather do? If set free at this moment what would you do?"

"Continue this voyage to New York."

Again Mark laughed. "Does Mrs. Saunders realize half how loyal you are?"

"Loyal? It had not occurred to me. And now may I look at your book?"

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"Of course, and put me through a catechism, too."

For answer Jane opened the book he gave her. Mark watched her as she read, smiling as she closed and returned it. "You don't like it?"

"I do not think that I should like it."

"How deep your training has gone; but here comes Mr. Saunders."

"Well, Mr. Witting, is your aunt quite comfortable, and will you take a walk with me and Janey? We take a tramp about this time every day. We walk for thirty minutes four times a day."

"Capital; something to do." Off they started, pulling down their hats, buttoning up their coats, catching step and tramping briskly until the color came clear and fresh to the girl's cheeks and her eyes had a brighter light in them. Mark Witting's many questions had worried her, and she was not sure that she would like him, but now he was drawing Mr. Saunders out in a way she had never heard before. She was amused, surprised, interested, and all the while Mark seemed to be caring for her. Moving chairs, putting out a protecting hand when the ship lurched, getting between her and the wind when they happened to pause. Mr. Saunders always walked with his hands in his pockets. If she stumbled, he cried, "Take care." If she came to a chair, she had to walk round it, and their conversations had been rather circumscribed. They had talked together so many, many times that they found themselves reduced to comments on their fellow-travellers. And even in this field Mark had been unusually amusing, and Jane found herself

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laughing as she had not often laughed. After the walk he went off to tuck his aunt in, he said, and make a report on the engine as a whole. Another time he would give it to her piece-meal, with remarks on the religious convictions of the chief engineer.

"A nice fellow," Mr. Saunders commented; "he'll lighten up the voyage." And he did. At the end of twenty-four hours Mr. Saunders said: "If you are going to be on deck, Witting, I'll go for a game of cards." Of course Mrs. Saunders would not have done such a thing; she would have found something for Jane to go and do, and Mr. Saunders had never behaved in this way before, and Jane, musing over the situation, thought that perhaps the talk of her being a young lady had made him feel that she was capable of taking care of herself. Whatever it was, she was not responsible. Up and down, up and down they walked, and Jane found it extremely pleasant. For the first time she was experiencing the sensation of being of importance, of being somebody. She had always stood in the shadow cast by Mrs. Saunders. Many pleasant things had been said of her in her hearing, but only as a creation of Mrs. Saunders's. One moment a cross, the next a crown, she had been always a sort of conductor of flattery to her cousin; now Mark was making everything seem quite different, was making her his first object. He tucked her carefully into her chair, watched that her jacket was buttoned, read aloud to her. He actually gave her orders in a quiet way when Mr. Saunders was absent, dropping back into his own place when Mr. Saunders returned.

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Twenty-four hours out from New York, sitting in Mrs. Saunders's cabin, Mr. Saunders casually mentioned Mark Witting. There was a pause, when Mr. Saunders took out his watch, and Jane waited. Then Mrs. Saunders said: "You have not mentioned him before."

"No? Well, I've found him very pleasant. He spends much energy on his aunt."

"I did not see them get on."

"Queenstown—they came aboard there."

"You have not mentioned it, Jane."

"Is it of such importance?" Mr. Saunders asked. "I did not know that you thought so much of the Wittings."

"The Wittings are nothing; it is that I am shut away from your confidence; down here alone while you are enjoying yourselves, and you drive me into greater loneliness by hiding things from me."

"Awfully sorry, my dear, but there's nothing to tell. The Wittings are aboard, and this fellow is twice the man his father was, though nothing extraordinary. Not very brilliant, but kindly and well-mannered. Janey has been most exemplary, has done her training much credit, and gave me no trouble at all."

"I'm not aware that I have ever permitted her to trouble you."

"Of course not; you've had what trouble there was——"

"Exactly, what trouble there was."

Mr. Saunders looked at his watch again.

"Pray don't stay if you've anything to do."

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"Nothing special, only we take a walk at this time every day; nothing that cannot wait."

"Don't let me interfere. Not that you lighten up things very much when you do come, mentioning interesting things only when uninteresting things have failed you. You two are a puzzle. All the world before you to see and to enjoy, yet you add nothing to the common fund of pleasure—nothing!"

"We must try to do better, Janey," and Mr. Saunders rose; "but we are so accustomed to leaning on you, my dear, to waiting for you to observe and explain, that we have forgotten how, literally forgotten how. We'll keep a sharp lookout now, however, and report again after lunch."

"I shall probably be asleep."

Mark Witting was waiting for them, and the tramp began. "Only one more day," Mark said.

"Only one more day," Mr. Saunders repeated. "I am really sorry; may we have another voyage together some day." After a little Mr. Saunders went away to his cards, and Mark put down the book he had been reading.

"Are you sorry that the voyage is over?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You did not say so."

"My opinion does not usually matter."

"It does to me—a great deal. I waited to hear you say something."

"I am sorry, very sorry that it is over."

"Will you come to Hillside Springs?"

"I shall wish to come."



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"You have no influence?"

"None. I shall not be consulted."

"What would persuade your cousin to come? Suppose you begged her to go somewhere else?"

"I've never asked her for anything in my life."

"And won't begin. How have you kept yourself so still; how have you so subdued yourself, or has your will been broken?"

"Cousin has never punished me in my life but once, and then she seated me in a chair."

Mark whistled softly, then said, slowly: "I'm glad that you have feeling enough left to regret the end of the journey. I shall miss you—miss you awfully. May I come to see you?"

"If cousin asks you."

"Practically, the voyage ends to-night," Mark went on, "for the whole ship's company will be at breakfast. I shall have to vacate my seat next to you, which is Mrs. Saunders's, and go with auntie to the other table. Will you grieve a little bit?"

"A great deal."

"Thank you. Will Mr. Saunders grant us a little grace this evening? The moon will be so beautiful; you cannot arrange it, of course, but I can." A little farewell supper, he explained to Mr. Saunders. Couldn't he and Miss Ormonde come on deck again after bidding Mrs. Saunders good-night? It would be only a little after nine o'clock, and as they all had separate cabins their going down later would not disturb Mrs. Saunders. Some champagne in the moonlight, just a little "In Memoriam" to the happy days

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that were done. And Mr. Saunders agreeing, the repast was had. It was for Jane an evening with a mark set against it to differentiate it from all the evenings of her life. She found herself surrounded by a thousand little deferences, a wonderful thoughtfulness, and even in the moonlight she lowered her eyes beneath some of Mark's glances. It was quite twelve o'clock before they went cautiously to their cabins, but it was well into the dawn before the girl fell asleep. The wine, or the moonlight, or something was sending the blood throbbing through her veins. A great elation was hers, her cheeks were burning, her eyes were shining, and even after she lost consciousness she seemed to be once more lying back in her chair soothed by the long roll of the ship, watching the high mast cutting an arc against the sky, listening to Mark's voice as he talked to Mr. Saunders, fearing Mark's eyes, yet waiting for every look.

At breakfast all was changed. Jane was once more in the background, Mrs. Saunders absorbing Mark and Mark seeming quite willing to be absorbed.

"How lonely she must have been during the voyage," he began. "She was accustomed to that," she answered, "and having taken time by the forelock she had guarded against illness; she felt it to be her duty so as not to trouble others." Mark bowed. "What rare thoughtfulness," he said, with deep conviction, and so on for the whole morning, until Miss Witting came on deck, then Mrs. Saunders made him put his aunt's chair next to hers, himself on her other side, advising Jane and Mr. Saunders to go to walk.

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"All the way over," she said, "I have heard of nothing but the necessity of their taking sufficient exercise."

Miss Witting grunted, and Mark said, in an impersonal way, that Miss Ormonde looked in better trim than when she came on board.

It was a dreary walk, even though they stepped briskly; they had to keep up appearances, and when they passed Mrs. Saunders and Mark Witting, Jane would find herself talking to Mr. Saunders. When the thirty minutes were up Jane stopped at the other end of the deck. Everything was being put in order; she had seen it all before, but now she appeared to be deeply interested in the movement about her. It was a long, long morning, and she kept as far away from Mark and Mrs. Saunders as she was permitted to do, until, Mark being absent for a moment, Mrs. Saunders said:

"I should like you to be at least civil to my friends," and Jane had to come and sit with them.

Mark did escort her to the carriage when they landed, but Jane did not look up at him, even though saying all that politeness demanded. The drive from the docks she found interminable, and was guilty of fidgeting a little.

"Repose is the atmosphere of a lady," Mrs. Saunders quoted, severely, "and if even these few days from under my eye has so spoiled your manners, Jane, what will your future life be? You cannot expect to have me with you always."

Jane drew back into her corner of the carriage. She longed to answer, and could not understand this long-

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ing, which was a new one. The glimpses of life which Mark had given her, life as other people lived it, he said, as other girls enjoyed it, had thrown new light on her own life. Yet, think as she would, she could not see in what other girls' lives, provided they were her equals socially, differed from her own. The girls she had met at the very exclusive dancing-school and gymnasium which she had attended seemed to be supervised just as she was. They did talk of lunches and parties among themselves, interrogating her as to why she was never allowed to accept an invitation, but she had felt no wish to go to these gatherings. She had not been especially attracted by any of the girls individually, and she could not see how they would give her pleasure collectively. But had she longed ever so much she would not have been allowed to dissipate in the very smallest degree. Jane must be absolutely fresh when she came out, Mrs. Saunders declared; must form no intimate friendships which might later on prove inconvenient; must not learn the modern slang, the modern hoydenish ways, the girl-of-the-period walk or views of life. So she was kept apart, educated at home, spending the last two years of her girlhood abroad, where girls were kept in the kind of subjection which Mrs. Saunders favored.

"A fair, fresh, innocent child," Mrs. Saunders explained, "who has never heard one evil word, who has never read a questionable book, who has never had a coarse companion. A girl trained daily and hourly under my own hand and eye, who if she ever goes wrong will do it because of heredity." Jane's manner

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to Mark Witting, however, had given Mrs. Saunders a moment of consternation. If the girl did not make more effort to please than Jane had made when in his company she would be a dead failure! After all these years of training, of airing her theories, of money spent in every direction, it was a disastrous possibility to contemplate. Her teachers had declared the girl to be clever; she could see for herself that she was graceful, was distinguished looking; what if she had no charm! What a fiasco! All-absorbing charm would be inconvenient, but she must have some charm, must at least be attractive. Must?—but was she? Mark Witting, whom she had discovered to be a very knowing man of the world, who recognized a good thing at once, had taken small notice of her, and yet he had been on the same ship with the girl for a week. And Jane had never struck her as being shy. Disastrous! She must take a cottage; she must entertain a little this summer; must try to make the girl as supple socially as she was physically.

Meanwhile, as they drove, she was harping on Jane's want of interest in people. The greatest charm a person could have was an unselfish interest in the people about them, a spontaneous sympathy. Southern people prided themselves on being responsive; Jane was a Southerner, Jane must be responsive.

"You scarcely answered Mr. Witting this morning."

"He scarcely spoke to me, cousin."

"When he did, however, you should have seemed interested; you should have answered in a light, sparkling way; have used a little badinage."

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“Why waste all that ammunition on Witting?” Mr. Saunders queried.

“How coarsely you put it, Henry; Mr. Witting is a very agreeable man; besides, good manners are never wasted. To be popular, to be successful, to be an unselfish Christian, one must be gentle and gracious to all who approach—to the very dogs and cats. Nothing is so fatal socially as strong likes and dislikes. Indeed, Christians should not have them; but if you are so prejudiced as to indulge in them, for heaven’s sake don’t show them. It is most extraordinary that, living with me all these years, Jane should yet be so deficient in these very rudiments of what is right and proper.”

“Let us give her another chance,” and Mr. Saunders nodded at Jane.

## VI

“For an evil blossom was born

. . . . .  
Blood-red and bitter of fruit,  
And the seed of it laughter and tears,  
And the leaves of it madness and scorn;  
A bitter flower from the bud,—”

BEFORE many days it was revealed to Jane that their destination for the summer was Hillside Springs, and she felt her heart leap up as it had not leaped before in her memory. Her life had been a stagnant pool until that voyage, when it had seemed to flow over the edge and become a running stream, bubbling and sparkling in a way that was a revelation. Suddenly it had dropped into another deadly still pool. A week in the dismantled house, which had been closed for two years, had been a dreary experience, more dreary for the week of unwonted freedom and new sensations just gone. Besides, Mr. and Mrs. Saunders being full of business, she was left without orders or suggestions. Horses, carriages, servants, silver, and all sorts of furnishings had to be sent forward. Mrs. Saunders always made herself comfortable, and as she could not be comfortable unless she had every possible thing that other people had, or that a person in her position could be expected to have, it meant a great expenditure of thought and money.

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"It is not exhilarating," Jane said to herself, and to her astonishment found herself missing the formal routine of her life over which she had so often yawned. At least those dull functions had been something to do. Now they were impossible, for, socially, Mrs. Saunders was not in town.

"On the wing," she explained to an acquaintance on the street. "Camping until our summer cottage is ready. When you hear that I am without Simmons, gone forward to arrange things, you will understand to what straits I am reduced."

So Jane had much time in which to think. Her nursery was still her room, and she had changed nothing. The shadows of many successive governesses, of many maids lingered there, but now that these people had gone out of her life she did not mind their shadows. In a way they had been vanquished. She would sit in front of the doll-house just as when a child, empty-handed, with the doors wide open. She could think better so.

She was thinking now that her excitement that last evening on the vessel had been silly. That they were going to this especial place would not mean anything. The pool of her life must bubble up a little, but what then? As a young lady it was bound to be different, but she need not expect anything that would at all remind her of the sea-voyage.

She expected nothing, of course not, and yet when she reached their summer cottage she found that it was quite different from anything she had thought of. She had lived in villas, in apartments, in hotels, but



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never before in a cottage, and to her it had meant a small house in a wood, and a little wildness about it. Of course, if she had had any sense at all, she would not have expected anything but a high state of civilization. A fashionable drive, a fashionable promenade, a fashionable park where there were buildings for the baths and the springs, and their own large house was only a bit of New York moved up, with trimmings from Paris and London. The carriage met them at the station; Simmons met them at the front door, and dinner would be served in an hour. What a sameness money put into life, and Jane walked up to her room slowly.

She had often wondered at Mrs. Saunders's pleasure in securing half of a parlor-car; seats for herself, Jane, and Mr. Saunders in one end, with Simmons, Colby, and the second maid at the other end; in sending for them to wait on her, to open her bags when she wanted a trifle, to fetch and carry in a thousand useless little ways, all the while shutting herself away from other travellers behind newspapers and books, behaving, indeed, as if the car was empty. Jane had wondered at it, then hated it. Now she wondered a little that a house had been taken—Mrs. Saunders so enjoyed life in a hotel where she could be exclusive in such an aggressive way. A house was to be really shut off. Of course in New York a house was a necessity, but having a home and a foothold, a hotel life was what pleased her cousin.

Standing at the window, dressed for dinner, she thought all this, then fell to wondering at the stillness.

## The Making of Jane

Deadly still, and the lamps on the road, that had at this point ceased to be a street, were very sparse.

Mr. Saunders seemed to have been thinking along the same lines, for at dinner he said: "It's a pretty big house, don't you think, and very far off?"

"I don't like to live in a bee-hive," Mrs. Saunders answered, "besides, there is still some training to be done on Jane."

"Isn't she done yet?" and Mr. Saunders smiled at the girl.

"After dinner," Mrs. Saunders went on, "I wish, Henry, that you will go to the inn and see who is here, and order whatever paper is printed here."

"May Janey come with me?"

"Of course not. The first evening? You astonish me. We are not settled yet. And have our arrival put in the paper. This place is called 'Woodside,' with commodious stables where our horses can be made comfortable, and beautiful tennis-courts; also, let your New York clubs be known——"

"Just as if I were dead," Mr. Saunders interrupted. "It'll be better to let a man come out and interview you."

There was a pause, then, as the servants were in the room, Mrs. Saunders turned to Jane and changed the subject. "So glad we have open fireplaces," she said; "cool evenings come so often in the hills. And I must find out about the baths to-morrow. Doctor Merriam thought that they would be good for me. He gave me a note to the physician here, who, of course, must advise me. I shall see him to-morrow."

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"Janey nor I will need the baths, will we?"

"I hope not, indeed; for me, I must watch myself, and whenever by any chance I reach a place that is suited to me I must make the best of it, if I have time from my daily duties. So, if I can arrange it, I shall take the baths. It will have to be before lunch, of course, so please, Henry, keep yourself disengaged for that time, for of course Jane must be looked after."

"You want me to play with Janey in the morning, then?"

"If you will."

"Delighted, I'm sure."

"You thank me as if I never provided for your pleasure. You will drive with me to the doctor's tomorrow, Jane, at eleven o'clock. You will wear your blue linen."

"Yes, cousin," and once more for Jane life had come down to a natural level.

It was a pretty village, and the homes of the real inhabitants did have the country look which Jane had expected, but about the park and the hotels there was the usual bazaar for Eastern stuffs, the usual "Art" shop, embroidery shop, florist, confectioner, and the like; Jane knew them all so well, they were everywhere that she had ever been in the summer, and she was so tired of them. Mrs. Saunders stopped at the florist's, leaving Jane in the carriage, then quite suddenly, as if he had been waiting his chance, Mark Witting appeared.

"I heard that you were coming," he said, "and have been watching for you. I'm so glad—but you

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know that. You are not looking so well. You look worn and out of spirits; what has happened? Nothing? I take that with a grain of salt—forgive me. And what quick work Mrs. Saunders made in getting the cottage. Nicest one in the place, and will you believe I selected this house? I happened to be in the fellow's office when Mrs. Saunders's letter came, and I made him take this house away from a man—fortunately the man had never seen it—and give it to you. I really did, I wanted her to be comfortable, so that she would spend the whole summer, and possibly take it for next year. I'm bound to stay here, you know, because Aunt Euphemia will not, any longer than is possible, be separated from her friend, old Mrs. Creswick. Quite romantic, was engaged to Mrs. Creswick's brother some time back in the middle ages, so far back that he was killed in the Mexican War. Imagine such faithfulness, such romance, single and solitary all these decades for the love of one man! And the old ladies always shed tears when they meet. Funny, isn't it?"

"No."

"I beg pardon, you are not of this workaday world that has no sentiment, no soul to speak of, or rather whose soul is an expedient, adaptable, almost material thing. 'Flower of the flesh,' some writer calls it."

"Here is Mrs. Saunders."

Mark turned quickly. "My dear Mrs. Saunders!"

"Why, Mr. Witting, pray put on your hat. If Jane has allowed you to stand all this time in the sun without it you'll surely have a stroke."

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"Only a moment, dear Mrs. Saunders, and the sun up in these hills does not seem hot at all. Do you like your cottage? And is there anything in the world that I can do for you?"

"Two things."

"Delighted."

"Direct the coachman to Doctor Malting's——"

"Are you ill, dear Mrs. Saunders? Been doing too much? Your eyes look tired."

"Doing everything, but I hope that I am not ill. Illness would be very trying with a young woman to chaperone."

"Trying indeed; but what is the other thing that I can do for you?"

"Come and dine at seven this evening. I must have someone to talk to. As for Jane and my husband, well—is it not so, Jane? Mr. Saunders is monosyllabic, and Jane is taciturn in three languages—you speak three, don't you, dear?" and she laughed musically.

"Oh! Miss Ormonde, will you speak German with me? I am so rusty."

"I'm afraid that her communication will be *ja, ja*, and *nein, nein*; but you will come this evening. Be sure to remember me to your aunt; and where does Mrs. Creswick live? Same old place? Then she is just beyond us on Elm Road. Thanks; good-by—be sure to come—seven o'clock."

"You are looking better," Mark said to Jane, dropping into a seat beside her for a moment after dinner; "you actually have some color."

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"The wine, probably; cousin likes me to drink a little now so as to become accustomed to it."

"And of course you don't like it. Do you like or dislike anything absolutely?"

"I see no use in formulating likes and dislikes."

"It would be of no avail?"

"It would be great discomfort for nothing."

"You must have a tremendous will."

"I have strong habits."

"A habit of self-control, a habit of aloofness. My child, forgive me—I'm ten years your senior—you are in a dangerous condition. Some day there will come a grand finale, a grand explosion, when you'll smash everything within reach."

"I'm afraid not. There's nothing to explode, and nothing to explode about. Here is cousin."

"You do not smoke, Mr. Witting? I thought that by this time you would have enticed my husband into two-syllabled words at least."

"It was you who wanted someone to talk to, Mrs. Saunders."

"True, but I did not know that a man could withstand a good cigar. This sofa is the least uncomfortable seat in the room," and she pointed to the place beside her. "I like Doctor Malting so much," she went on, "and this air is such a tonic that I verily believe I'll take this cottage for another summer. At all events I shall send for some decently comfortable chairs, and some cushions, and things of that kind. Now tell me about the people who are here, and the amusements—the afternoon amusements, for I shall be

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under treatment of one kind or another every morning. At last Mr. Saunders will have to do something, he will have to look after Jane." Then the talk went off to the country club, the golf-links, the tennis-courts, and the affairs of friends who were in the place or expected, while Jane, who had changed her seat to one nearer the lamp, embroidered silently.

The color in her cheeks that Mark had alluded to had risen there when he so unexpectedly had come in from the dining-room and had taken the seat beside her. Now that he had changed his place, and was entertaining Mrs. Saunders, the soft bloom was fading. He was talking to Mrs. Saunders, yes; and seemed to be absorbed, yes; was looking at her continuously and bending over toward her, yes; but his voice was different, quite different. "My child," he had said—"My child," and the tone had been a caress. A ringing came into her ears, and the embroidery blurred under her eyes. A wreath of passion-flowers, conventional passion-flowers. She smiled a little, everything about her life had been conventional, even passion-flowers!

"What are you thinking?"

She started violently. Mark was leaning over her. "Mrs. Saunders has gone to speak to Mr. Saunders," he explained. "What were you thinking?"

The lovely color came back at once. "That all my life had been conventional," she said, "even to conventional passion-flowers," and she spread out her work.

"Conventional passion-flowers," Mark repeated, and

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looked at her searchingly. "Remember that grand finale," he said, "that grand explosion I warned you of. Be careful, it would be better to kick over the traces a little bit, to do something unconventional, just to save yourself. Let me be your mentor, I who am so old. You will be safe with me, may do giddy things with me, and it will be all right, because I will understand," and he drew her work from her hands. "Do you remember on the ship when I buttoned your coat for you so unexpectedly, how shocked you were? That hard button close under your chin? That was unconventional, but I had to do it, you were so temptingly proper. All the while on the voyage I was studying you, but I never dreamed that you would have any thoughts about conventional passion-flowers. A new view of you who have so many sides. Do you know that you are a dangerous young person, dangerous because you are so cold, so calm, so piquantly reserved. You tempt a man to all sorts of extravagances in order to rouse you. I have to deprive you of your work in order to make you listen to me."

Jane pushed her chair back a little.

"You need not be afraid of me; I am an old man of the world. You are not twenty, and I am thirty. I am nearer to Mrs. Saunders than to you. She may be forty, she does not look it, and is very handsome. No, don't be afraid of me; I'll be your mentor, your brother, so to speak, and I tell you these things more to warn you than to make you vain." He had straightened up now, and was looking at the embroidery critically when Mrs. Saunders reappeared.



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"Henry does not know," she said, "but I shall write and find out. What is the matter with Jane's work?"

"Nothing; I am looking at the design, there is a parable in it," and, returning the work to Jane, he resumed his seat next to Mrs. Saunders.

"A parable? Jane, dear, go fetch that piece you have just finished. A parable?" she repeated, looking up at him.

"Conventional passion-flowers," and he bent over her; "you are so—dear Mrs. Saunders, you are so—but—here comes your young chaperone," and he rose to look at the new piece of embroidery which Jane had obediently brought.

The next morning Jane was sitting on a bench back from the front and away from the house, that was under some trees in the yard. At one end of the bench there was a pile of bright cushions which Jane had not utilized, on top of which lay a book at which Jane had not looked. On the other end of the bench reposed a tennis-racquet and balls; at her feet, some golf clubs. Her costume, from her hat to her tennis-shoes, was a harmony that took its key from her gray eyes. Mrs. Saunders had gone for her treatment, three hours; Mr. Saunders was reading the papers on the front piazza, and Simmons, the butler, who surreptitiously had, from Jane's first entrance into the house, played into her hands, had this morning first suggested tennis to her, bringing the tools, then came across the lawn with the golf clubs, and again Jane had thanked him.

"The madam bein' gone, Miss Jane," he had suggested, "it's sure Mr. Saunders 'll be glad to take you."

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"Yes, Simmons."

Later he came with the cushions, then the book, but found Jane no further advanced toward a morning's pleasure. "Is it sick you are, Miss Jane?" he had asked.

"No, Simmons; I don't want to move, that's all," and so she sat until Mark vaulted the fence and came lightly across the grass.

"What luck," he said, "sitting alone and still, and yet with all the sporting gear at hand. Comforts, too, that you have not heeded. Where is your guardian?"

"Reading the papers."

"Nice dragon that; I'm better than he. May I arrange these cushions? I really came to take him down to the club, and will carry out my intentions when he discovers us; meanwhile we will not disturb him. What book have you?"

"I do not know; Simmons brought it out."

Mark laughed a little looking at it. "Scarcely yours," he said. "But do you never feel inclined to look at the books Mrs. Saunders leaves about? Are you afraid of her?"

There was a moment's pause, then in her turn Jane asked: "Why do you question me about a person to whom I owe so much?"

"I beg your pardon; indeed, indeed that was not my stand-point. Forgive me, but you have so deeply interested me; you are so different from all the girls I have known that you puzzle me; the whole situation puzzles me. Your face is so full of character, your eyes of wistful questions, and yet you never assert

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yourself—you never make an inquiry. Of course this is remarkable, and I am puzzled. What has stilled you; what has made you so subdue yourself? I am not wishing to know your family affairs, nor wishing you to criticise Mrs. Saunders, believe me. Most girls would make a point of reading any book that was advised against or forbidden; you do not seem to see them. Most girls kept as closely at home as you, as carefully guarded, would treat men very differently; you do not seem to see the men any more than you see the books. You say it is all habit; how were these habits formed?"

Jane waited a moment, then answered, slowly: "My father and mother gave me to Mrs. Saunders when I was a little child. She has done everything for me. I have not thought about it much, but when a person has done all for you it is only natural that in return you should regard their wishes."

"Grateful and loyal," Mark said, almost as if to himself, and turned over slowly the pages of the book he held. Presently he rose. "I must really speak to Mr. Saunders about the club," he said, and went away.

And the hour of noon found her still sitting on the bench with all the implements, still untouched, about her. Did gratitude and loyalty drive people away from one? was the question she had been pondering.

That afternoon she was taken to call on an old lady, where they met Miss Witting. "Dear Mrs. Creswick," Mrs. Saunders said, "how glad I am to see you once more. How well you are looking. This is my cousin, rather, my husband's cousin, who lives with us. I

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wanted her to know you, dear Mrs. Creswick. I've brought her up, I've done my best for her; and now as she emerges into the world I want her to meet first all that is best."

"She's very deaf," Miss Witting said, dryly; "she has not heard you, but she understands that you are introducing the girl."

The color rose in Mrs. Saunders's face. "Has she a trumpet, or anything?"

"Oh, yes; and you can say it all over again if you like, but she is just as well satisfied without it. She's a simple soul, God bless her."

Mrs. Creswick, meanwhile, had handed the trumpet to Jane. "I did not hear your name, my child."

"Jane Ormonde; I'm Mrs. Saunders's adopted daughter, I am Mr. Saunders's cousin."

"So? I've heard about you then from Mrs. Kennet. So glad to meet you, my dear." Then the trumpet was handed to Mrs. Saunders, and Jane, with her color rising, heard herself spoken of as never before in her life.

"Modest?" Miss Witting suggested. "Never heard yourself praised before?" then she grunted a little and chuckled to herself.

"I think this is such a pretty country," Jane ventured.

"Very pretty. Have you seen my nephew to-day?" And Miss Witting had now lowered her voice.

"Yes, for a moment; he came to take Cousin Henry to the club."

"So—doing the polite. Do you like him?"

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"Of course, Miss Witting."

"Which means that if you did not you wouldn't tell me."

"But I do, Miss Witting; we all like him."

"You cannot really need asseverations, Miss Witting," and Mrs. Saunders turned her lips away from the ear-trumpet, then back again to explain the situation to Mrs. Creswick, and to add how much they liked Mr. Witting, and how happy Miss Witting ought to be to have such a dear nephew with her all the time.

Mrs. Creswick nodded. "Yes, and I am happy, too. My dear Laurence—you know Laurence?—comes to me every summer. With all the world tempting him, he comes to his old grandmother."

Mrs. Saunders's eyes were suffused. "Listen, Jane," she said; "how beautiful!"

Once more Miss Witting grunted. "My boy," she began, then she took the trumpet from Mrs. Saunders—"My boy," she repeated, "is quite different from yours, he sticks to me because he has nothing and nobody."

Mrs. Creswick patted her on the hand. "You do not mean that, Euphemia, you are such a tease. Mark is a dear fellow." Then the trumpet was handed to Mrs. Saunders, and once more Jane tried to talk to Miss Witting, but it was up-hill work, and she was not sorry when Mrs. Saunders rose.

"I don't visit at all," Mrs. Creswick said at the last; "but Laurence will call at once—at once, my dear," and she nodded to Jane, and once more Miss Witting grunted.

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"Old cat!" Mrs. Saunders said as they got into the carriage, then no further word was spoken until, down in the village, they met Mark Witting. The carriage was stopped, and he came to them.

"Finish the drive with us," Mrs. Saunders said, and he got in. "I've been calling on Mrs. Creswick," she went on, "and your aunt was there."

"Is always there."

"Do you love her?"

"Not a bit; do you?"

"Has anyone ever loved her?"

"Yes, Mrs. Creswick's brother loved her before the Mexican War."

"Good heavens! fancy the Mexican War as the date for one's last love-affair."

"Rather mossy, but think of the romance, the faithfulness! Miss Ormonde would admire that."

"I do myself," Mrs. Saunders put in quickly, with a toss of her head; "it is beautiful."

"In the abstract, but I could not live up to it. Have you met Creswick?"

"Long ago, when he was at college; we've been abroad so much—is he nice?"

"A model."

"I am very anxious to meet him. I suppose he will call."

"He will, I heard him tell Mr. Saunders so this morning at the club."

"And Henry did not tell me."

"Is it of such importance?"

"Not at all, only Henry and Jane have a way of never telling me anything."

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Mark smiled at the girl. "You may be sure then that she tells no one else anything. How safe; suppose she babbled?"

"It would have been corrected long ago."

Jane was looking out across the hills and fields, it was a way she had learned when Mrs. Saunders made her the topic of conversation. Indoors she would stir her tea or examine her glove-buttons. Now the color rose slowly in her cheeks, and Mark changed the subject, asking what they would do the next afternoon; if no engagement, would they take tea with him out at the golf-links. Very comfortable club-house, and they could play a little.

"You'll teach me?" Mrs. Saunders asked.

"With pleasure." Then the invitation was accepted.

Reaching home they found Laurence Creswick on the piazza with Mr. Saunders. Tea was brought out, Jane was put to make it, and Creswick took his seat beside her.

"We've arranged a walk for to-morrow morning," he said; "the weather is so cool, and the hills are so lovely. Mr. Saunders has consented to go; will not you go also?"

Jane looked at Mrs. Saunders. "A walk?" Mrs. Saunders asked; "why of course, yes. At what time, Mr. Creswick?"

"Quite early, ten o'clock. Mr. Saunders is coming."

"And Jane; but I shall be unable to join you. I undergo treatment every morning. Will you go, Mr. Witting?"

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Mark shook his head. "I'm not a walker. But when you have finished at the baths, Mrs. Saunders, won't you drive out and meet them?"

"And give you a lift? Ah, Mr. Witting, lazy, lazy."

His chair was near to hers, and he said, bending over his tea as he stirred it, "Do you think it all laziness?"

"I'll stop for you at ten o'clock then," Creswick finished; "and if we are belated we can get lunch at a farmhouse. You will like that, Miss Ormonde?"

"Very much." Then the young men went away.



## VII

“Go practise if you please  
With men and women : leave a child alone  
For Christ’s particular love’s sake !—So I say.”

IT rained during the night, clearing toward morning with a brisk wind that made it seem more like autumn than early summer. “In white!” Mrs. Saunders remonstrated at breakfast, “and so cool.”

“It is duck and short; shall I change it?”

“No; it’s hard on the laundress, though; I was thinking of her. I never forget my servants. You must wear your white jacket and your black hat with field flowers; thick boots, of course, and those white wash-leather gloves.”

“Can’t she go barehanded in the country?”

“No, Henry. I don’t approve of this modern way of girls going bareheaded and barehanded in the summer; by winter they look like washer-women. I have been most careful of Jane’s complexion——”

“You’ve been most careful of all of Jane,” Mr. Saunders interpolated.

“Of course; and cannot let her spoil herself just as she is coming out. Nor do I believe that in their hearts men like hoydens. The womanly woman is man’s ideal still.”

Mr. Saunders nodded at the girl. “So you’ll wear those gloves, and perhaps carry an umbrella.”

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"No, her hat has an unwired brim which droops a little. And remember, Jane, that Mr. Creswick it is who asks you for this walk; he is your host, and you must talk to him."

And later Creswick thought that he had never seen so flower-like a face as the one that looked at him from under the drooping hat-brim. Other young women of the party were, as Mrs. Saunders had said, bare-headed and brown, nice healthy girls, but the slim young thing who stuck so close to her guardian, whose color came and went so rapidly as one after another the walking party was introduced, who said so frankly when Mr. Saunders walked off with one of the bare-headed girls, "I am so glad I met you yesterday," charmed Creswick, and he answered quickly, "Of course, we are old friends. And then you know my grandmother, too, and loved her at once."

"Yes, and she called me 'my child' so gently. Miss Witting was there, too."

"My grandmother and she are very devoted friends."

"Yes; Mr. Witting told my cousin of the love-story. I thought it a pity to tell on her."

"You are quite right; as the old lady has been faithful and silent, her friends should be silent and faithful."

"Do you like people who are grateful and loyal?"

"Without doubt."

"Do men as a rule like them?"

"I think so."

"A man said that I was loyal and grateful, then he ran away."

## The Making of Jane

"He, probably, had not those virtues."

"Oh, I'm sure that he has!" then changing the subject quickly, she asked the name of the point to which they were walking.

"I don't know that it has a name, those hills yonder; see?"

"Those blue hills? Have you ever read the poem of the people who longed to go to some hills that they could see from their homes? Where they lived the hills were green, these far-off hills were blue, and seemed so much more beautiful."

"And then?"

"They sacrificed everything and journeyed on foot to the blue hills, a long, long journey, and when they got there they did not know it, because, you see, the blue hills were also green."

"Poor souls; we will call these hills the 'Blue Hills' then; you've named them."

"I've thought about that a good deal," Jane went on, "and wondered if all blue hills turn green when once we reach them."

"What has been your experience?"

"I've had no experience."

"You've never looked forward?"

"Everything has always been arranged for me."

"Parents and guardians always do that, but that does not prevent dreams."

"If I dreamed, I would want the things I dreamed about, and if I could not get them, I'd be unhappy."

"You might get them, if you would tell Mrs. Saunders."

## The Making of Jane

"She always has everything planned just as it must be; she says it saves trouble."

"And if all trouble has been saved you, what have you had in life?"

"Maids and governesses, and all the things such as teachers and clothes that everyone has."

"Only the few have these things."

"Cousin does not like me to hear about poor people," Jane said quickly. "She says there are so many fads about them; that in America everyone has a chance to rise, and if they do not it is their own fault. She says that young girls are so apt to become romantic and absurd over poor people, and bring diseases into nice neighborhoods."

"I feel very differently about all that."

Jane looked up quickly. "Perhaps I have given you a wrong impression," she said; "perhaps I have been talking too much. I do not often talk so much; sometimes I cannot talk at all. Cousin says that I am taciturn in three languages. She has had me taught two languages besides English. I hate them."

"Why?"

"They worried me so; and I never liked any of my teachers. Now I shall not have any more; I shall go into society."

"Do you wish to?"

The girl sighed. "I don't know; everything will be arranged just as it has always been, and from what I hear, society seems rather difficult; it may be worse than the teachers. Do you know small talk?"

Creswick laughed. "I suppose I do, but I'm not very clever at it."

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"I am told that it is an art that has to be carefully learned. The weather and a little touch of what you hear is always safe; but never say disagreeable things of people, because it will be surely repeated; and never try to be smart or sharp, for that makes enemies, and Christians should never have enemies, and should always be popular. Is this what you think about it?"

Creswick drew his hand down over his face and lips where a smile was lurking. "I've never gone into it so carefully, Miss Ormonde. The weather, of course, and a little touch of what you hear, that's gossip, and everybody is devoted to gossip; that's as far as I have gone."

"So you just talk about the weather and gossip?"

"I'm afraid so."

"And does it answer?"

"I am not considered a brilliant conversationalist."

Jane looked up quickly. "How do I talk to you so easily then? I shall tell you the truth about it. Cousin said that you were my host on this walk, and therefore I must talk to you; and I wondered and wondered what I should say to you; and instead of being embarrassed, I have not stopped a moment. I don't understand it; but it can't be my fault, for I've never done it before. I hope that society will be as easy as this."

"I shall be in society, you know, and you can always talk to me."

"And all these girls and men?" with a gesture toward the party.

"Not all; some of them do not live in New York."

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"And when I meet them I can talk to them of this summer, this walk, of you? That will be easy; heretofore I have only listened."

"Then you should have known all about small talk."

The girl shook her head. "Cousin did not let me stay to talk to the men, and the old ladies talked about people I did not know." They walked in silence a little way, then Jane asked: "Have you known Mr. Witting long?"

"Off and on for some time. Do you know him well?"

"He came over on the steamer with us."

"And was driving with you yesterday."

"Cousin picked him up on the street. I am sorry for old Miss Witting and her lover. Do you think that she cries about him in the night?"

"Miss Witting? I am afraid not."

"Her blue hills were green."

"Yes, and your blue hills as to her tender heart are also green."

"Somehow I did not think that she had a tender heart exactly, for she is neither kind nor gentle; she chuckles and grunts when people are talking, as if she did not believe one word they were saying."

"She has lived in the world so long."

"And the world does not tell the truth?"

"Truth emerges finally."

"At the judgment-day."

"I believe in a multitude of judgment-days. I have experienced many. Every summer when I meet my grandmother it is a sort of judgment-day, because she

## The Making of Jane

believes in me so entirely. A really good, true soul is always a judgment-day to us frailer ones."

It was a pleasant walk, and up on the hills they stopped at a farm-house and bought some bread and milk, and, turning home again, Creswick still walked with Jane, and they were so walking and interestedly talking when they met Mrs. Saunders driving and Mark Witting with her.

"How jolly you look," she called; "what a nice color, Jane, and of course you do not want to drive back."

"Of course not," Creswick answered; "do you, Miss Ormonde?"

"No, no," Mrs. Saunders interposed. "Her color means some little heat, and to drive under such circumstances would mean a cold. No, run on; we will drive a little farther and catch you before you reach home." But they did not meet again, for the walking party cut across fields, jumping fences and pushing through hedges, being tired of the road, they said.

That afternoon they went out to tea at the golf-links with Mark Witting. Creswick was there and Miss Witting. "As stupid an amusement as ever I've seen," the old lady declared; "and of course, Mrs. Saunders, you don't play; let the young people tire themselves out with it; you stay here with me."

"But I have an engagement with Mrs. Saunders to teach her." And Mark held out his hand to lead Mrs. Saunders down the steps.

"Then you'll have to break it," his aunt retorted. "I'm not going to sit here by myself, and Mrs. Saun-

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ders is the only member of the party who can talk as I like to talk; so come here, Mrs. Saunders, and we'll have a nice time. I've got lots of social bones I want to pick; come. Go, Mr. Saunders, go, Laurence, go, Mark; Miss Ormonde, please amuse them." And they left Mrs. Saunders smiling and waving to them.

"Did you have a pleasant walk?" Mark asked Jane during one of the pauses.

"Very."

"Have you taken my advice and done anything unconventional?"

"I climbed some fences, and crept through some hedges."

"And Creswick helped you?"

"Yes."

"It seems an age since I last saw you."

"You had a nice drive with cousin."

"Of course, when you were walking with Creswick."

After awhile they were together again. "You snub me horribly," Mark declared.

Jane looked up. "Everyone prefers to talk to cousin," she answered.

Mark laughed. "Mrs. Saunders is charming," he said, "but you might pay me the compliment of looking interested when I talk to her in your presence."

"You lower your voice."

"You imagine that."

"I had not thought so."

"And you seem not to wish to talk when on rare occasions we are together."



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"It was you who left me on the bench."

"After a most awful snubbing; after I had been made to feel myself a Paul Pry; it was trying, especially when nothing was farther from my thoughts."

"I only told you the truth as to why I should please Mrs. Saunders."

"And the truth gave me an uncomfortable blow; that is a way truth has; and I am afraid that you always tell the truth. Have you discovered what conventional truth is," he went on; "the little civil fiblets that make the social world go round? I believe in that kind of truth, because it and the tellers of it amuse me so. I like to upset it, too, by telling the real truth, and then, ten to one, you are supposed to be joking. But I am becoming afraid of you; you and Creswick, I suppose, tell the real truth all the time, and moralize like two Sunday-school books. I'd like to be invisible and listen; two models."

"It's my turn," was all Jane's answer, and she drove across the field.

At tea Mrs. Saunders talked to Laurence Creswick, and Mark immediately took his seat on the steps where he had placed some cushions for Jane. "Why will you not contradict me a little?" he asked. "I tried so hard to be provoking and irritating this afternoon, and you did not seem to see it."

"I do not know very well how to dispute," Jane answered. "I don't know about badinage and repartee; I have not learned it."

"You have lived a silent life; you've listened, and yet you read a parable in conventional passion-flowers."

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"That was an accident."

"An inspiration. I tried it on Mrs. Saunders and she looked intense, as if she were looking through a mill-stone. She has very handsome eyes. But what will you do to-morrow morning? Sit on that bench? And to-morrow afternoon?"

"Cousin has not told me."

"Heavens! I warned you the other day about an explosion, but sometimes I'd like to take hold of you and give you a good shaking; forgive me, but your passivity is the most tantalizing thing I've met with in all my life. If your cousin should tell you to cut off your pretty nose, would you do it?"

Jane laughed. "She does not like ugly people," she answered.

"And that is all that saves your nose?"

"What *are* you talking about, Mr. Witting?" And Mrs. Saunders leaned forward.

"Pure nonsense, Mrs. Saunders; I'm only trying to tease Miss Ormonde a little. She is too good, you know; much too good." And Mark shook his head. "She has bowled me over and battered me so severely with lumps of truth, that I am morally black and blue. She drives me into uttering sentiments which I do not hold at all, then changes the subject in a gentle, firm, but disapproving, manner. You ought to feel so safe, Mrs. Saunders; your training has gone so very deep."

"It has been so unceasing."

"I believe you."

That night as Jane's hair was being brushed, Mrs. Saunders entered the room and dismissed the maid.

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"You are not pleasing me," she said when the door was closed.

Jane looked up.

"You are making both yourself and me ridiculous," she went on. "First, you must not speak of yourself as my adopted daughter; I object to it. Again, you must change your manner, must cease to be so literal, must take people as you find them and not hold up absurd standards. I would even prefer a little slang, a little scandal; anything would be better than this goody-goodiness. Of course you must be good, but that need not make you hopelessly prim and old-maidish. I must tell you quite plainly that I intend you to be a social success; that I have trained you and educated you to that end, and to be a social success you must be pliable; you must, when you go into a company, adapt yourself to it, or to the more important half of it at least. The early Christians were commanded to be all things to all men; this meant simply to be pliable. You have met two young men; each of them has mentioned to me your wonderful adhesion to my training. This makes me ridiculous, and I will not have it. I wish you to be trained, not to talk about it. The highest art is to be artless; the best training is to seem absolutely spontaneous. Mark Witting was actually impertinent about it this afternoon. Now, remember what I say. To-morrow morning you will not go out; you have been out twice to-day, and I do not wish you to be always on view. And another reason why I wish you to stay at home, is that the dogs arrive to-morrow, and your Cousin Henry will have

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to look after them a little, and of course you cannot go with him. I wish you to take the dachshund which will come—he is a gift to your cousin—as your especial dog, and attach him to you. He is named after a dog in one of Matthew Arnold's poems—Geist—it is considered a very touching poem. I shall find it for you to read, then you will know why you named your dog Geist. I will send to the library in the morning for the book, and you can memorize it while I am at the baths. You will put on your pink dimity in the morning. In the afternoon we take tea at Mrs. Creswick's; at dinner we will have Laurence Creswick, Mrs. Kennet, and old Mr. DeLong." Then she kissed the girl on the forehead and went away.

Mrs. Saunders had gone for her treatment; Mr. Saunders had gone to receive the dogs—a pug, a toy spaniel, pets of long standing, and the new addition to the household in the shape of a dachshund, and once more Jane sat on the bench under the trees. Simmons had not tried to tempt her this morning, for at breakfast he had heard the plans for the day discussed; but a little while after breakfast he had approached Jane bringing a book. "Joseph has brought this from the library, Miss Jane, and Mrs. Saunders said that you were to have it at once."

Jane took the book from the tray, and now, under the trees, she held it in her hands listlessly. Lessons were not yet over, it seemed. The dog was to be named Geist, and in this book there was a poem about Geist; she hoped it would not be long. On the page of contents she found "Geist's Grave," that must be it. Alas,

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twenty verses! She sighed. Mark Witting said that other girls were so different. They were; on the walk the other day she had seen that they were very different. Which of them would be learning a long poem this lovely morning? They were probably out on the breezy golf-links—bareheaded. She looked up at the drooping brim of her hat. What use to think about it; perhaps after the first season was past things would be different for her, too; and she turned to the poem.

She did not know how long she had been studying when she was startled by a thud, and looked up to see that Mark Witting had once more jumped the fence, and was approaching her.

"I begin to believe in my luck," he said. "I begin to believe in doing my duty. Piously each morning I go to see my aunt, and as I return I find you sitting on this delightful bench. Creswick, meanwhile, does too much duty; he is winding wool for his old lady. What is this? Arnold's poems—whew! You care for him?"

"I am just reading him."

"Not enough go for me. Will you mind communing with me instead of Mr. Arnold?"

"No."

"Thanks; what shall we talk about?"

"What is it to be pliable?"

"Mentally, morally, spiritually, or physically?"

"Socially."

Mark laughed, throwing back his head a little. "Good! That combines them all," he said. "That means to know everyone's income and position; that

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means to know when to be blind, and deaf, and dumb, for we need always to be one of these things, and sometimes we need to be all. It means long training, infinite tact, careful amiability, cultivated patience, endless endurance. It means to serve God and Mammon. Do you wish to be socially pliable?"

"Is it not necessary?"

"If one could be it without being found out," Mark answered, "it would be grand."

"I thought it was a great accomplishment."

"It is, if one has just the right quantity. Just the right quantity, and people say that you have tact; a little more, and people call you politic; to be always sweet, always smiling, always flattering, and you are immediately discounted as a hypocrite."

"I suppose that it is tact that I need."

"Who says that you need anything?"

"It is not necessary that one should say it to me."

Mark laughed. "It is plain to see," he said, "that 'Cousin' has been lecturing you." And he put his elbow on the back of the bench and turned more toward her. "I am surprised," he went on, "that a woman as clever as Mrs. Saunders is, should try to change you, should not see how charming your simplicity is, your quiet revelation of your approval or disapproval. Because I told her that you were so well trained, I suppose; I am surprised."

"I am always saying the wrong thing."

"Each word is perfect."

"I am prim and old-maidish."

"I see; well, I like you just as you are, please; I

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like to be snubbed by you ; I am longing for that grand explosion to come, but I will give you a lesson in pliability if you like."

" Please."

" You must follow my lead in conversation absolutely, remember ; when I pay you a compliment you must blush and look coy ; when I criticise your dearest friends you must cap me ; when I praise, you must cap me there, too ; you must seem deeply interested and answer look for look intensely."

" I am always interested when you talk."

" You did that admirably ; you are an apt scholar."

" But that is true—you know it."

" Capital !"

The color rushed to the girl's face.

" Better and better ; I paid you a compliment, and you are blushing most charmingly. Look at me now—you won't ? That is charming, too, but it compels me to lean over you—round you—to see you."

Jane drew away, turning on him angrily.

" I've not seen a prettier bit of coquetry in many a long day." And Mark himself drew back, putting his head a little on one side and looking at the flushed girl critically.

" You are laughing at me."

" On my soul, you are mistaken. You have no more sincere admirer ; but if Mrs. Saunders is not careful, she will spoil you by making you conscious—that's a bit of criticism, cap it—say ' I love her, I owe her everything, but I cannot be blind, and cousin has her faults. She simply dotes on taffy, and in order to get

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all she wants, everything she does must needs be praised—I am one of the things she has done; I must gain applause for her.’ You won’t say it? you loyal little child! Not even in joke; won’t you even say that she is vain? that she would like a little flirtation, and then look at me and smile knowingly, and nod?”

Jane looked at him, but she did not smile. “You are making very poor jokes,” she said, slowly.

“Granted; I’m only giving you an object-lesson in pliability. You cannot be pliable; don’t try.” Mark’s manner changed. “Child,” he said, and laid his hand on hers, “you don’t understand your cousin, and she makes a mistake in terms when she tells you to be pliable. She means only that you should be merciful to faulty creatures like myself, not to reprimand me into sorrow, not to snub me into hopelessness. Will you mind if I straighten your hat a little? Just as you have it now the drooping brim hides your face entirely.” And without waiting for any permission, he pushed her hat gently.

Jane did not look up, and Mark once more, leaning his elbow on the back of the bench, watched her, smiling. The silence weighed upon her presently, and she moved a little.

“I’m afraid that I have offended you,” Mark began again; “you will have to forgive me. You seem a child to me, but I suppose I will have to learn to treat you differently. And then you mind such little things. I’ve tied girl’s sashes, I’ve hooked girl’s gowns, I’ve done up a girl’s hair, and many other things that would be—well—straightening



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a hat is nothing. Besides, we agreed that you were to practise little unconventionalities on me in order to prevent that grand explosion. All the same, I beg your pardon. Let me see that poem you are reading." He took the book from her and opened where her finger had held it. "'Geist's Grave'; let me read it to you." And as he read, it seemed to be quite a different thing to Jane; beauties came out that she had not dreamed of; the words seemed to bloom, and the cadences were full of music. He finished and she did not speak; he waited a moment, then rose. "Good-by," he said. "Forgive me; I have not meant to offend."

The next morning on his way to his aunt's, Mark found her standing at the gate with Mr. Saunders, Creswick, and three small dogs. "Lovely!" he said. "Are they yours, Miss Ormonde?"

"Only one." She stooped to pat a dachshund. "This one; his name is Geist." And she looked up at Mark.

## VIII

“ We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair ; thou art goodly, O Love ;

. . . . .  
Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire ;  
Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire.”

JANE had been taken to a number of afternoon entertainments of late years, and as a looker-on from behind Mrs. Saunders, had found them uninteresting ; but she felt that the tea at Mrs. Creswick’s would be a very different affair, and under careful directions, dressed for it with some excitement. For the first time in her life she was pleased that her gown was beautiful ; that the maid pronounced her hat to be a dream ; that Mr. Saunders applauded when he saw her. All this had happened before, and she had smiled because the maid amused her, because she loved her Cousin Henry, but now her pulse quickened ; a light came into her eyes and an exquisite color into her cheeks.

Mrs. Saunders looked at her critically. “ Very nice,” she said ; “ but all my efforts will be useless, Jane, unless you discover a little animation. Pray try to make yourself agreeable this afternoon, and to everyone, remember.”

The tea was out on the lawn, and made a pretty pict-

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ure as they drove up. Laurence Creswick came to the carriage, and Mark Witting met them farther up the garden walk, dropping behind with Jane. " 'Cousin ' has exquisite taste," he said in a low voice, nodding at Jane; "and she is wise not to let you ruin your complexion. See how odd these sunburned girls look in delicate summer fabrics and flowery hats. 'Cousin ' is wise. You look like a lily in a great bunch of sunflowers; and watch how the men will flutter about you. And please appreciate the men; we've labored unceasingly to get them. See, here comes old Mr. DeLong, wonderful old person, at least two hundred years old, but of course you have met him. Of course, Mr. DeLong, you know Miss Ormonde? "

"Only as a little girl, my dear Witting; a very small little girl, who was wonderfully quiet. So glad to renew our acquaintance, Miss Ormonde; as a child, you caused me much thought."

"As a young woman she is also causing much thought," Mark put in.

"Of course, of course; but as a child, Miss Ormonde, you were so wonderfully good. You never fidgeted, you made no noise, and your eyes were so large and grave that they troubled me. Do you remember at all what you thought about us grown-up people? "

Jane shook her head. "It was all a great puzzle," she said.

"And now, Mr. DeLong, she is a great puzzle."

"Naturally; her sex always is." And the old man took off his hat with a little bow.

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Creswick was more with Jane than Mark was, but the girl had a consciousness that Mark was never very far away, and that his attentions to Mrs. Saunders were but another method of attaching himself to her. Nor was there anything conspicuous in the attentions of Laurence Creswick; and yet Jane was made gradually to know herself the centre and cause of the whole affair. It was a new sensation; it seemed to make her blood run faster, her heart double its beats; she felt as if she were talking and laughing excessively, and more than once glanced furtively at Mrs. Saunders. Mark intercepted one of these looks, and laughed as he shook his head at her. He was standing by Mrs. Saunders, and the color deepened in her face. "She is such an irritating girl," she said, coldly. "To see her look at me, one might think me a tyrant, who had beaten her black and blue. I have charged her not to look at me at all when in company."

"Who can blame her for longing for your approbation?" Mark asked. "And who could think you a tyrant? And how exquisitely you dress her; is she properly grateful?"

"Grateful? I don't for one moment think that she realizes what I have done for her."

"Truly?"

"Can you not see it? But of course I have not done it for gratitude. Wealth is a great responsibility, and it weighs on me that I must dispense mine wisely."

"More wisely, more generously than anyone I know."

"Oh, Mr. Witting!"

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"Do you not know it? Do you not realize that in your face, your eyes, you carry the story of your life?"

"I who have tried to make my face a mask? Don't tell me that I have failed."

"Shall I tell you what I see? Shall I say unsatisfied longings?"

"Why have we not known each other all these years? I who have no friend who could understand—and now?"

"Now we will—we will—never mind what we will do." And Mark nodded encouragingly. "Other people besides immature girls can be fascinating, can have happy friendships; is it not so?"

"Jane is looking at me again."

"Smile and nod," was ordered, and Mrs. Saunders obeyed. After this they found a bench, and Mark brought her an ice, and when good-byes were said he drove away with Mrs. Saunders and Jane.

From this time events seemed to move more rapidly; and as the weeks went on and the season culminated, instead of letting Jane go out a little as she had planned, Mrs. Saunders took her everywhere, and in addition made her own house a centre. Lunches, dinners, afternoons, followed each other in quick succession; a continual round of something to do, that caused her to be extremely popular. She still, however, kept a strict watch on hats and veils for Jane, still drew the line at the golf-links in the morning, still went for treatment, leaving Jane close at home. The deep piazza was Mr. Saunders's haunt, the bench on the lawn was Jane's. Creswick was there sometimes, but much oftener it

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was Mark; and at last one day Mark said: "Unless you prefer to be conspicuous, there is a pleasanter place for this bench; may I move it?" And without waiting for an answer, he picked up the bench and put it farther back in a copse that sheltered it completely on every side. The next morning Creswick came, and looked about in vain until Geist, catching sight of him, rushed forth, revealing the new retreat.

"How charming!" he said, as he stooped under the arching shrubs; "how much nicer than full fronted on the road."

Mark came, too, that morning, but lingered only a moment to get a book, he said; later, he came back with Mrs. Saunders in the carriage from the springs. Again Geist barked, and Mark said, "So ho! the bench is moved; shall we find it?"

"I must," Mrs. Saunders answered; and they found it, and Creswick, reading aloud to Jane. A startled expression came into the girl's eyes and a little wonder as she looked at Mark; but he and Mrs. Saunders were all smiles, and he said, "Geist did it."

Later Mrs. Saunders asked Jane, "Does Mr. Creswick come often in the morning?"

"Quite often."

"Do you like him?"

"Yes." Then the color faded from the girl's face, but no further questions were asked.

And so time sped until September came; and the first touch of autumn in the air, and Mrs. Saunders declared that she must go to the mountains before returning to town. She had been keeping house all sum-

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mer, and must have a little rest at some good hotel as preparation for the winter's work. They were at the inn listening to some music when she made this announcement, and Mark, sitting next to her, said: "This has been the happiest summer of my life."

"And I have found a comrade," she answered.

"Do you really need to go?"

"Yes; many things say go; go while people still want you."

"What nonsense! you know that you are always wanted; that you have been the heart and soul of the summer to the whole community, and to——"

"Surely the community is enough?"

"Surely, if it satisfies you."

"Teased; how easily."

"In your hands I am as wax."

"I shall, then, mould you into a patient man, who will wait quietly until the winter."

"Mould me, rather, into a calculating machine, that will count the days and the hours until the winter. But you will not be so closely chaperoned in the winter, will you?"

"You nonsensical creature!"

"You are hard-hearted."

"It is time to go home."

"You are cruel; but you will come again next year? The treatment has done much for your complexion; it has moved from good up to perfect."

"Yes, I shall come again; it is a charming place!"

Jane had heard Mrs. Saunders's announcement as to leaving the Springs, and had tried to hear more, but

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Mark's voice was low, and she could only hope that he was persuading Mrs. Saunders to reconsider. He had a strange amount of influence over her cousin, and the next morning when he came to the bench she asked him.

"I did my best," he said, "but she will go. You will be sorry?"

"Of course."

"You'll miss Creswick?"

"Yes."

"You like him?" And Mark laughed a little.

Jane nodded. "He's very nice."

"Only nice?"

"He is earnest; I believe in him. He does not tease one, and set one problems to solve; he is restful."

"And nice."

"Yes."

"I'm content." There was a pause, then Mark took the embroidery out of the girl's hands and put it to one side. "Look at me," he said, "and listen. You are going away presently, and it is time you understood certain things."

A tremor went over the girl, but her look did not waver.

"I've taught you much this summer," Mark went on, "and now the time has come for another lesson. In his quiet, gentlemanly way, Creswick is in love with you."

"Oh, no!" and Jane drew back as from a blow.

"Yes, and soon he will tell you so."

All color left the girl's face. "Please ask him not to," she pleaded.



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Mark laughed. "It's quite a triumph; he's a great catch," he said. "Don't be afraid, just say no; but do not hurt him; be gentle, not fierce, as very young girls often are when they do not like a man; be gentle, and keep him your friend. Be sure you do that, else you will have trouble. Now, mind me."

"Yes."

"Of course I've known all along," Mark continued, "how it would be, how he would love you, but be quite unable to get your heart out of storage. You know—realize—that your heart has been in cold storage all these years? Has been frozen, has been torpid until I came? Mrs. Kennet told me this, and I realized it the moment I saw you; I realized, too, that I could take it out and warm it into life."

There was a look of startled wonder, almost of fear in the girl's eyes, and the color had mounted up to the roots of her pretty hair.

"And you need not deny that I have done it, child, nor be afraid." He was leaning back, looking out through the opening in the shrubbery. "And I've been very wrong to do it," he went on, as if to himself; "very wrong, for you know I am a poor man; not a pauper exactly, but poor. At the same time," turning suddenly to face her, "at the same time I love you; hear me, I love you. I love you so that it nearly wrecks me. Love you so that I can scarcely keep my head to play my part in the daily round. I've read somewhere that long before any moral obliquity has been shown in life or action, the character has been eaten away; my character, unknown to me, must have rusted

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out long ago, for I am ready to do almost anything to win you. Don't be afraid; I shall not touch you—not yet.”

No snow was any whiter than Jane's face now, no stars any brighter than her eyes, and her hands were wrung together in her lap.

“No, not yet,” and Mark clasped his hands on top his walking-stick that was between his knees, and leaned with his cheek down on them, looking at Jane sidewise. “Not yet,” he said once more; “not yet; it is enough to have told you, enough to sit and watch the color come and go, watch the light in your eyes, and know that I can summon it. To look at your lovely, tender youth and know that you are mine. This is enough for this time. Two bites of a cherry? I believe in absolutely nibbling my cherry; in holding it up and looking at it in every light, in thinking about it, before some day I crush the dear life-blood out of it. Don't tremble, little one; don't be afraid of me. How many times have I danced with you and barely guided you; how many times have I laid my hands on yours in seeming friendship? No, I shall not touch you, but I have something further to teach you. You must trust me; you must behave as if this had not happened, were not so, else I'll have to leave you. That shakes you? Well, it is in your hands. Quiet your heart that I see beating there under your frock, in your pretty white throat. How it throbs, *my* heart! It is in your hands, sweet one, whether I stay in your life, or leave you to Creswick and his quiet, gentlemanly affection. You'll keep silent? ‘Cousin’ won't expect

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you to tell her; she says you never tell her anything—so you'll keep silent for a little while?"

"Yes." It was only a sigh, but he heard it.

"And you'll treat Creswick kindly when he speaks. So, now I must go; 'cousin' will soon be coming from the springs. She's getting fatter, I think, but I'd not risk my life telling her so. Here's your work; stay here until you've thought it all over quietly. It would not do for you to meet even Simmons looking as you look now. You remember that I told you about the grand explosion, the grand finale that would surely come to you some day? You realize it now as Creswick could never have made you realize it. I've been wrong to do it—perfectly wrong—but then I seldom do right. I am a bad man, child, do not deceive yourself, a very bad man, and I've been training you up to this for months, coolly and deliberately, and you will never be the same again, never. But I love you, don't forget that; I love you. We ride this afternoon, you remember; to-night we dance at the inn. Do not be surprised if I ride beside Mrs. Saunders, and if I do not dance with you at all. I may only look at my cherry until she becomes accustomed to being my cherry." Then he took his hat and without one backward glance went quietly away.

Slowly, as if out of a mist, Jane saw the shrubbery about her resume its place in her vision. If her heart would not beat quite so loud, if the rushing sound would go out of her ears, she might realize things better. She took up her embroidery which Mark had laid on her lap; her trembling hands made that impossible,

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and she laid it down again. She would never be the same again, he said; of course not; she would never want to be the same again. And all his attentions to Mrs. Saunders had been meant for her, Jane. Did Mrs. Saunders realize this? Would she like it? He knew better than she did, and he had said be silent. Never the same again; she had lived a whole life since breakfast, how could she be the same? All this time he had been loving her and making her to love him, and she had not realized it. She had never read any love-story like this, never; the things she had read had been quite different, had been, in a way, religious. Mark said that he was bad, a bad man; was he? Was all that he had said and done wrong? She would like to ask Laurence Creswick, he was always so sure about right and wrong, but of course she could not, of course not. She could only trust Mark and wait in silence.

She did not know how long she sat there before Geist rushed out barking, followed closely back by Mrs. Saunders. Jane had one second's warning, and bent over her work.

"Alone?" she said; "truly, it is time for us to be gone. You'd better come in; there's no use in your waiting here any longer, especially as we have lunch earlier to-day on account of the ride. Come in."

It was a beautiful ride that afternoon, and though Mark rode beside her for a few moments only, riding in turn with every member of the party, finishing the last long home stretch with Mrs. Saunders, yet for Jane that ride was filled with joy. She knew now what Mark was thinking when he looked at her, and

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somehow she could talk and laugh more easily; she seemed to have more confidence in herself; and Mrs. Saunders hearing her, said to Mark, "I'm glad to hear that girl talking; she has evidently taken my warning as to making herself agreeable. I found her sitting alone in the arbor this morning, and I suggested that it was time we were going away. When even Laurence Creswick, who is too mild to require much holding, once he is attracted, when even he leaves her alone, it is time that she exert herself."

Mark laughed. "Alone, this morning, did you say? Poor little girl; I'd have come myself to entertain her; all the same, I think that Creswick is much attracted, and in time he will propose."

"As you say," Mrs. Saunders went on; "she chaperones me tremendously."

"She does, indeed. Will she not have classes this winter in the mornings? It will not do to let her mind go to waste."

"It would be bad."

"Or there is another solution." And he looked boldly into Mrs. Saunders's eyes that were shining. "Let me marry her."

"You—marry—her!"

"Exactly; think a minute, and you will see."

"You love her?"

"That's an unnecessary question. As her husband, I shall be your cousin—son—brother."

Mrs. Saunders drew a long breath. "She is young—as your wife——"

Mark laughed lightly. "A bud is a hard little knob," he said. "You can see into the heart of a rose."

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"You'd love to watch a bud expand?"

"I'd love to look into the heart of an expanded rose  
—I read some verses once—

'The rose has burst forth into gorgeous bloom,  
And the sun kissing deep in the glorious gloom  
Of its quivering heart,  
Made it happy—'

and again he laughed lightly.

That night Miss Witting appeared at the inn to watch the dancing; Mrs. Kennet was there, too, and old Mr. DeLong, all of them sitting together.

"Jane Saunders holds her own wonderfully," Mrs. Kennett said. "She does not look a day over thirty-five."

"In another year she'll be hopelessly fat." And Mr. DeLong shook his head up and down.

"She tells me that she is renewing her youth in her dear girl." And Miss Witting chuckled.

"I suppose she was looking to the future when she adopted her," Mrs. Kennet said; "a flower for the bees that one wishes to hive; it seems to me just now, however, to be your dear nephew with whom she is renewing her youth."

Again Miss Witting chuckled. "He will have to see me home," she said. "I'll ask him—I'll warn him not to blight her young affections. I've never been able to bring myself to believe in Jane Saunders; she's so false that she does not know it; would not know truth if she met that lady face to face—Truth is a lady, is she not?"

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"By courtesy." And Mrs. Kennet smiled at Mr. DeLong.

"I never contradict a lady." And he bowed.

"But you sometimes go against truth," Miss Witting retorted. "However, I'll test Mark's manners in the matter of truth. I really think that he always tells me the truth; I really do." And going home, she said: "You seem to be very attentive to Mrs. Saunders, Mark."

"Of course, aunt; don't you see the logic of it?"

"But you need not talk to her until her eyes shine and her cheeks get too red."

"Only sweet dalliance, auntie; she's married; she loves her world and its good opinion."

"Of course! of course! I don't mind about her; but the girl, she's a sweet thing."

"And I love her; I swear it."

"I've heard you say that before."

"This time I'll stake my life on it."

"What a risk! But this time I'm interested, because I've taken a fancy to the girl; she must be almost a saint living with Jane Saunders so long, and I insist on two things: first, if you hurt the girl, I cut you off without a cent; second, I don't 'take my shoes off until I go to bed,' and you must not marry a poor girl, depending on me for your living. For the rest, you can play this game as you like. I don't care a snap of my finger for Jane Saunders; but you should be careful, Mark, for you are not a good man; remember that."

"And never pretend to be."

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"But it's only if you behave yourself that I'll remember you—and maybe more."

"Of course more; I carry on your family name, and am the most presentable and successful of your nephews. But bad as you think me, I love the girl. Her eyes are like stars, auntie, pure, clean stars; and her lips—I scarcely dare think of them."

The old lady sighed.

"You understand, auntie?"

"Does the girl love you?"

"I have great hopes."

"Laurence Creswick?"

"Is my most dangerous rival. His fortune is sure, you see; mine is not; and Mrs. Saunders knows it; came here because the Creswicks were here. I'm playing rather a dangerous game, and I will tell you true, auntie, a game I could not play if I were a good man."

"Or Jane Saunders a sensible woman."

"The root and ground of her offending is self," Mark answered. "When we are our own centre and circumference, we can sink to any depth of misdoing; we can rise to any height of folly. That's the reason I've always made such a point of being unselfish, auntie."

"Exactly; what makes your wickedness so black, Mark, is that you do everything so deliberately."

"Of course, else it would cease to be wickedness and become folly; but here we are; you'll forgive me and kiss me for good-night, auntie?"

"Yes, because you are interesting; but if you hurt



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that girl, I'll disinherit you, without fail ; on the other hand, you must not marry on the strength of my will."

" I shall marry only for love," Mark answered ; then he went back to the dance and told Mrs. Saunders that his aunt had spoken of his attentions to her. " You'd better let me be your cousin by marriage," he finished.

" Instead," she answered, " I'll go away."

## IX

“Alter ? when the hills do.  
Falter ? when the sun  
Question if his glory  
Be the perfect one.”

THEY had been back in town for some weeks ; it was Mrs. Saunders’s day at home, and Jane sat alone in the drawing-room, waiting for the first ring of the bell. She was in no state of expectation as yet, however, for it was early, very early ; far too early for anyone to come, but Mrs. Saunders insisted that it was Jane’s duty to be in the drawing-room at this abnormal hour. “ It is the least you can do,” she declared, “ to give me ease in this matter. Everything that I am doing, I am doing for you, and it is hard if I can get no help. All morning I am busy, and I must rest after lunch.” So Jane was at her post, walking about restlessly, pausing to touch a flower, to look critically at the tea-table, to stand a moment before the fire.

The winter had held some surprises for Jane. Many times she had heard Mrs. Saunders say, “ When you come out, you can do this ; when you are a young lady, that will be quite proper.” So that gradually there had grown up in the girl a feeling that she would have much more liberty of action than it now seemed probable that she would enjoy. She had found classes in

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French and German arranged for her mornings; she found herself taken to dressmakers and milliners with as little consultation as in her childhood; she found that in public she was more than ever kept close to Mrs. Saunders's side, and further, she found herself restless and lonely as she had never been before. There were other arrangements, also, which, though small, were surprising. Instead of a maid going with her to and from her classes, she found that Simmons and Joseph were to alternate in attending her, and Simmons so fussy about breaking his routine before lunch, and Mrs. Saunders so hesitating about giving him extra orders. Mrs. Saunders, too, was different. Gayety and hilarity such as Jane had never experienced in her before, that made Mr. Saunders stare, alternated with a gloomy coldness that was as trying as it was inexplicable, or an absent-minded dreaminess that in a woman of Mrs. Saunders's alert, calculating temper was astonishing.

But to Jane, the strangest part of these first weeks in town had been Mark Witting. She had never seen him alone, nor had had any talk with him since that morning on the bench when he had made her betray so much—that talk, that, though the memory of it still made her face to burn, yet had come to seem almost a dream. She had promised to be quiet, to trust him, but whether she had promised or not, there was nothing else now for her to do. He had come to the reception that had introduced her to the world, he was coming to the series of dinners which Mrs. Saunders was now giving, he was always in the theatre parties,

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and had been given a standing invitation to the opera box once the opera began. He even came to their afternoons at home; but never once had he alluded, even by a look, to that last talk on the bench; never once had he sent her a note, never once a flower.

She had turned these things over and over in her mind many, many times; she was turning them over now as she walked restlessly to and fro. "I was wise to make a rule against expectation," she said to herself. She paused in her thoughts; she had never formulated what, in this case, she meant by "expectation," and the color burned in her cheeks. It was an odious suggestion to crop up, and she turned away quickly, mind and body, from this confusion of thought. She walked to the fire, and, taking up the shining tongs, a thing she was never permitted to do, she poked it. Instantly Simmons appeared, and she looked up guiltily. "I was only so tired, Simmons," she said.

"Sure, miss, that's natural; but your hands, Miss Jane."

"Your tongs would not soil them, Simmons." And she sat down wearily.

The servant gone, the thoughts she had turned from came back to her. The young men she was meeting did not please her, and she was lonely, strangely lonely. Perhaps if Creswick would come to town things would be better; she wished that he would not stay so long with his grandmother. But what use in thinking about it; in reasoning or wondering; in putting the rather bald reality of the winter down beside her in-

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tangible but brilliant dreams. What use in trying to deceive herself with the thought that the men she was now meeting were not interesting? Whom did she compare them with? Mark Witting, of course! and there was no use in putting Creswick's name along with Mark Witting's. No use in beating about the bush. She could only be quiet. She had promised to trust Mark, and Creswick was soon coming for the winter; then, perhaps, things would mend. He had come down for the reception and for one or two of the dinners, and any day might be expected finally. He had written her one or two notes and several times had sent her flowers; but to her great relief he had not as yet fulfilled Mark Witting's prediction. That prediction had made Jane uneasy for a time; had rendered her constrained when in Creswick's company, a change that had puzzled him, and that, of course, had influenced him. Time, however, had worn away her apprehension of an awkward moment, and in her present state of mind, she often found herself thinking of Creswick's quiet friendship with something like longing. He had never failed her; there had been no ups and downs in their intercourse, and she hoped that when he came she would cease to feel this loneliness which she so frequently felt now.

So she was walking about and thinking, when the portière was lifted and Creswick himself was announced. In her preoccupation she had heard nothing, and now started violently.

"How strange!" she exclaimed.

"Why strange?"

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"I was thinking about you."

"Telepathy, quite natural; but you are not looking yourself; going too much?"

"I don't think it is that." And they sat down.

"Then you are not happy?"

Jane looked up quickly. "I've been lonely—everything is different—the young men——" The confession came hesitatingly, as if she were deciding for the first time that these things were so.

"Your hills are green," Creswick interrupted, "and as for the young men, they are young, that is all; they want the earth all at once, and don't know yet that to give is to gain; but what has become of Witting?"

"He is in town, but I have seen nothing of him."

"So? And what else has happened?"

"I have lessons every morning."

"Really, you surprise me; but why lessons?"

"Cousin wishes me to keep up the languages. I don't mind it, really, and rather enjoy the walk back and forth."

"And you really see very little of Witting? Are not he and Mrs. Saunders good friends?"

"Why, yes, I believe so."

"I only meant that your seeing so little of him, he and Mrs. Saunders might have fallen out. Witting is so strangely frank, you know."

"Yes."

"And I am sorry that your first winter has not been all that you dreamed it would be."

"I cannot say that I had any dreams; it was rather the pleasantness of the summer that has made the con-

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trast. The summer went beyond any hopes I had ever indulged in; it was charming."

"It was, indeed." Something in his voice made Jane look up, and she saw that in his eyes which brought back to her Mark Witting's prophecy. The wretched, betraying color rushed to her face.

"Don't look away, Miss Ormonde," Creswick went on. "There is no use in trying to avoid what I have come especially to say, have come shamefully early on purpose to say; that is, if I were so fortunate as to find you alone. You don't know at all how I am going to put it; I promise you it will not be bad." And he laughed a little. "Truly, truly I am not going to ask you anything; look this way, please. I am only going to tell you something."

Creswick's amused laugh had given Jane a shock, had made her cold with the dread that she had mistaken his look, and for the moment she hated Mark Witting because his prophecy had stuck in her mind.

"I'm only going to tell you about myself," Creswick went on; "tell you that I love you very much, and that I hope some day to win you. You need not feel any embarrassment about it; indeed, if you had been a little more experienced you would have seen it long ago. I have loved you from that first walk, I think, and I think as surely that I shall love you to the end of my life. If you do not, if you never learn to love me, it will be just the same, so that you need feel no uneasiness. I am years older than you are, and I have a habit of knowing my own mind; and my mind is to wait, and watch, and love you, in the hope that some

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day you may come to love me, in the certain knowledge that some day you will need a friend."

As he spoke Jane's self-consciousness, her misery faded away. His face was so strong, his eyes were so gentle, his voice rang so true. When he paused, her eyes, that now were raised to his, were full of tears.

"You do not mind," he said, and held out his hand.

"I don't deserve it." And as simply as he did it, she put her hand in his. One moment he held it, looking down, as if communing with himself, then laid it on her knee. "Thank you," he said slowly, "and God bless you for your sympathy. You have not promised anything, remember, and when I am gone, you must not feel frightened or worried. I know that you do not love me, but I wanted you to know that I loved you—that you can always depend on me, and I shall talk to you about it very often. Not on my knees, you know, not swearing 'before high Heaven,' but only as being the main element of my life. Anything that one thinks about and feels about continually, must necessarily come into one's talk with one's nearest friend; besides, I think that it may be some protection to you in your life in the world. You are so very young for your years, you are so very ignorant, that, though guarded and watched as you are, you yet may rush into danger; and if you will learn to look on me as a confidential friend, as one who will always love you, will always be on your side, even if disapproving, who will never hesitate to stand between you and the world, it may be a safeguard to you far more sure than any watching. You will remember this, won't you, and you



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will rely on it, turn to it? Give me your hand on it, and good-by. I'd rather not meet anyone just now." Then he went away so quietly that the closing of the front door after him roused Jane with a shock.

She sprang up. "Mr. Creswick!" But he did not hear her, and she waited breathless, fearing that Simmons had. And why had she called? What would she have said if he had come back? He had not asked her to say anything any more than Mark had; Mark because she had betrayed herself, and this one because he only wanted permission to give—give the best that he had. If he had come back what would she have said? She sat down slowly. Her life had been so barren of love, was that it—was it the novelty of love that she found so—she paused for a word. She shook her head; she could find no word for what she felt. Her heart had been kept in cold storage, Mark Witting had said, and it was true, and as true that he had taken it out; then how hopeless was Creswick's position; and she had promised Mark to be silent; Mark, who now scarcely seemed to be aware of her existence. Her restlessness returned, and when Mrs. Saunders came down she was asked not to pace about like a wild animal in a cage.

"I have so often told you, Jane, that repose is the atmosphere of a lady."

"Yes, cousin."

"I see Laurence Creswick's card in the hall."

"He would not let you be disturbed."

"He was dreadfully early; has he come down for the winter?"

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"Yes."

"It's time his grandmother set him free. Ah, Mrs. Brown, so glad to see you!" And Jane released from further catechism, took her seat at the tea-table.

At the dinner the next evening, Mark Witting sat almost opposite to Jane, who had been assigned to Creswick. "She is a charming looking girl," the woman on Mark's right said to him.

"She?" Mark queried.

"Miss Ormonde; you were looking at her?"

"I might not have been seeing her."

"Scarcely; she is a picture to-night, and Larry Creswick seems to be absorbed."

"Some people are like sponges."

"Are you jealous, or simply spiteful?"

"Either; both; what does it matter when a fellow is poor?"

"But she is the adopted daughter; Mr. Saunders told me so himself, and of course will have ample dowry; and then your aunt."

"As she elegantly expresses it—'Will not take off her shoes until she goes to bed'; and she may sit up late, you know."

His companion laughed. "She is getting so tottery I should think she'd like to move on and get some wings to help her legs. It's wings we're to have, isn't it?"

"Who knows. Legs are good enough for me if I can afford horses. But Miss Ormonde is charming, and if I were Creswick, with the ball at my feet, I believe I'd kick it in her direction."

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"How flattered she'd be if she could hear you; but she seems to have ears for Larry only. If she has any sense she'll accept him; he's the best fellow I know."

"It would be wise. He'd be good to her, and give her more liberty in one day than she has had in all her life put together. I came over on the steamer with them this spring, and have seen something of them this summer. My aunt, who knows everybody and everything, says that from her earliest childhood the girl has not claimed even her own hands and feet."

"Dreadful! how much does Mr. Saunders claim?"

"His legs—to get away on. All the same, I find Mrs. Saunders most entertaining. She's one of the cleverest women I've met in a long time. He is dull—dull as the average ditch-water, but very good."

"'With stupidity and sound digestion, man may front much'—he may not mind having nothing but legs to get away on."

"Perhaps; but I'd break her will or die in the attempt."

"How transcendent! Perhaps the poor woman has been made into a tyrant by subserviency. Was the money hers?"

"Most of it."

"And I've never heard of her as clever."

"An admirable business woman."

"Oh, money-sense! I thought you meant intellect. I have money-sense myself."

"I'd consider myself enormously clever if I had sense enough to get money."

"You have; you have every requisite for marrying a rich girl."

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"I've promised my aunt, my dear, virtuous aunt, who holds the golden spoon just out of the reach of my mouth, that I'd marry only for love."

"In this commercial day and generation? You've become morbid."

"Else she won't leave me her money."

"What an impossible old person."

"No, that's her fad. Some people have a fad for dogs, some for doctors, some for religion, some for stamps; her fad is love. She was in love herself once."

"Pathetic."

"Most; but according to her, I must neither marry for money, nor marry depending on her money; so you must kindly point out a girl with money, and I'll fall in love with her."

"Miss Ormonde."

"I'm in love with her already, but am not sure about that dowry; and think what a disagreeable husband I'd make if I were poor."

"Very true; but Mr. Saunders told me that the girl was his adopted daughter."

"And Mrs. Saunders holds the reins and the purse-strings."

"I see; but as you know Madame so well, why not ask for permission to propose? Tell her your prospects, and she'd tell you the girl's."

Mark laughed. "I'm not a lion-tamer."

"Afraid of her?"

"Deadly."

"How interesting; then I'd better look elsewhere for an heiress for you, and you had better begin to call your heart home."

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"You are quite right." But after dinner he found his way to Jane's side.

"You did not look at me once during dinner," he said.

"Did I not?"

"And do not even realize it. I'm afraid that you are losing faith in me; or is Creswick interfering?"

"Mr. Creswick is my very good friend."

"And I?"

Jane did not answer; did not look up.

"So, little one," his voice lowering to a tone of exquisite tenderness, "the test has been too hard? Child, child, you do not know. My love has not wavered, does not waver, will never waver; but if you choose to throw me over I cannot help it. I cannot just now behave any differently; things are against me. If I could claim you before the world, God knows how gladly I'd do it; but here comes Creswick." And he went away to where Mrs. Saunders was making herself agreeable to an important personage, leaving Jane in a state of tremulous bewilderment that presently crystallized into fear and a suddenly awakened conscience.

The phrase, "Claim her before the world," made her see herself as plunged in deceit. Never in her life had she willingly told Mrs. Saunders anything; but neither had she wilfully concealed anything since the days of the "candy money." In the summer just gone, when Mark had said, "Keep this quiet, your cousin says that you never tell her anything," she had agreed; and had felt no qualms, had not realized her position; and Mark's ignoring of her, after reaching town, had made

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her feel that there was nothing to tell, had made her to grow hot and cold over what Mrs. Saunders might have said if she had betrayed herself. But now things were coming home to her in a new light. Creswick's avowal had been made at a moment when Mark's neglect had reached a climax of hurt humiliation; when she was lonely and was laughing herself to scorn for having expected anything, for believing in any estimate of herself other than Mrs. Saunders's, which was not exhilarating. Mrs. Saunders had never commended her that she could remember, save in a tentative way—"I had hoped that you were improving, Jane; that you would be a credit, but now——" Then all of Jane's failings, from the first wiping of her eyes on her sleeve, would be passed in review.

No, Jane had had no encouragement in vanity, in self-esteem, until the summer just gone had brought her face to face with an astonishing suspicion that she had possibilities of some kind within her. She had had much attention, and two men of the world, men of unquestioned standing, had declared their submission to her charms, and for the first time it had come to her to look forward a little. But on coming to town all this had failed her, and she had once more descended into the valley of humiliation, there to wander until Creswick's avowal had once again led her up into a more soothing atmosphere and had left a comforting assurance that her summer had not been a dream; that if Mark Witting had repented him, had found her different in a different environment, had wearied of her, that Creswick, at least, was true to his summer atten-

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tions. It had been a bitter period to the girl, though, true to the habit of her life, she had made no sign, and she was grateful to Creswick that he had poured balm into her wounded self-respect; but no sooner had this been done, no sooner had she drawn a few calm breaths, than Mark had once more stepped in and had thrown over her the old bewildering glamour. There had been a passionate tremor in his low voice, in his hurrying words, and in his eyes a look that had set all her pulses throbbing. He had meant all that he had said in the summer; was holding her to her promise of silence. Then across the quiet talk of Creswick which she was not hearing, across the thrilling memory of Mark's hurried words, there arose the horrid realization that she was concealing something serious, was wilfully deceiving Mrs. Saunders, was playing false to Creswick. She made a half-smothered exclamation and looked up guiltily at her companion.

He stopped suddenly in his talk. "What is it?" he asked.

She shook her head, the blood dyeing her cheeks, her throat, her forehead. "Nothing," she answered quickly; "it is nothing."

Quietly and kindly Creswick went on talking, while she made up her mind that she must tell him. She must first ask Mark's permission, and if he did not release her from her promise of silence, she would break it; anything would be better than her present position.

It was at a ball that the moment came, and watching Jane dancing with Creswick, Mark said: "My aunt has heard further remarks about my attentions to you."

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"How is that possible?" Mrs. Saunders returned quickly.

"I don't know, unless, perhaps, it is servants' gossip; but I thought it would be wise if I should call on Miss Ormonde once or twice; if I should dance with her more. Creswick's attentions are so favorably received, that the world could only pity mine as being hopeless. It will be wiser to heed public opinion, I think."

Mrs. Saunders patted her foot on the floor impatiently.

"You love your world, you know," Mark went on.

"How absurd you are; what have I done to endanger the opinion of my world?"

"One need rouse only the faintest suspicion."

"And you think the suspicion has been roused?"

"I have given you my grounds."

"Some stray remarks of your aunt, who is an old cat."

"With sharp claws. Let me pay attention to some other girl than Miss Ormonde, then."

"You are impertinent; pay attention to whom you please."

"Now you are speaking like a wise woman." And immediately he moved away to where Jane was standing with an ardent boy, who, meanwhile, had succeeded Creswick.

"My dance, Miss Ormonde," Mark said quietly.

"Indeed—" the boy began.

"At least a share of it," Mark amended. "If you have forgotten, Miss Ormonde, I have not."



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"Oh! I say," the boy began once more.

"It was all mine," Mark asserted; "and to relieve Miss Ormonde of embarrassment, I give you half my dance."

"Then we'd better begin at once." And the boy whirled Jane away. Mark waited, and when, for the second time, they were passing him, he stopped them. Jane had said no word in the matter, and now when Mark moved off with her so quietly, so possessively down the ball-room, she seemed to have stepped into another world.

"I longed to thrash that doltish boy," he said, "claiming my property and then the way he danced! He slung you about the room as if you had been a football. I watched you dance as long as I could bear it; at last I had to come and take you."

"Someone will hear you."

"My child, I'm old in this sort of thing. I'm holding my head well up; my eyes are watching coldly this cyclonic crowd, that they may not run into you; my mustache covers my lips, and no one, not even lynx-eyed 'cousin,' would suspect that I am talking to you. And you've never danced before, have you, darling? Not even when with me have you ever danced like this. Do you realize it? Do you realize how I long to dance you through that door, pick you up bodily and rush with you to the end of the world? Only my unbounded self-control keeps me in the midst of this staring, gaping crowd. You do not speak, child; do I take your breath away? I'm afraid so; you feel like a trembling, fluttering little bird. Don't be afraid; trust

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me, love me—that damned music has stopped! Forgive me,” drawing her hand through his arm, “a man’s feelings will get the better of him sometimes, unless, like Creswick, he has enriched his blood with skimmed milk. Sit down in this window with me a moment; no, we may not; I see ‘cousin’ coming, and Creswick with her. I’d like to say about them what I said about the music. Take the lights in out of your eyes, sweetheart, and shut your pretty lips so that they will not tremble. We cannot betray anything yet. And I’ll leave you with them; I cannot talk to Mrs. Saunders just now. Ah! Mrs. Saunders, have you been dancing? That music is not good, and the room beastly hot. I’ve tried to save Miss Ormonde, but I’m afraid that she’s exhausted. I really must get a breath of fresh air; will you excuse me?” And he bowed himself off.

“The best-ventilated ball-room I’ve ever been in,” Mrs. Saunders commented. “You must not have entertained him, Jane.”

“Perhaps not,” Jane answered slowly. Her voice sounded faint and far away to her, and she wondered if it sounded so to Mrs. Saunders, to Creswick. She dreaded Mrs. Saunders’s always suspicious inspection; she dreaded Creswick’s quiet eyes. She had not Mark’s facility for coming back to the commonplace world, coming back from the tremulous realms into which he so easily swept her. Mark should have stayed by her longer.

“You have lost your color,” Mrs. Saunders went on.

“Perhaps Mr. Witting has exhausted Miss Or-

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monde," Creswick suggested. "Perhaps the fault of non-entertainment lies on his shoulders."

"Perhaps," Mrs. Saunders granted; "if he does not choose to exert himself he can be hopelessly dull."

The color rushed back to Jane's face now, and she longed to say a few words; instead, she went off quickly with a partner who had come to claim her.

And she had not asked Mark to let her tell Creswick. Indeed, she had not said a word. In the rare moments when they were together, Mark's breathless rush of passionate declarations seemed always to tie her tongue, to make her heart beat until she seemed deaf and blind, but she would ask him—she must ask him; she could not be false to Creswick. When she finished this dance she would take her stand by the door through which Mark had made his exit. Perhaps he would return that way, and fortunately Mrs. Saunders was at the farthest end of the room.

"Let us stand here a moment," she suggested to her partner. "It's a little cooler." And as she paused she saw Mark out in the hall.

"You should not stand in a draught," he said, coming at once to her side. Her partner made his bow, and she turned to Mark. "I came here to look for you," she said.

"Indeed! and now your partner has left you, I will have to take you up to 'cousin'; and she will not like that."

"But I wanted to ask you something; and you can sit me down by Mrs. Kennet over there."

"And you wanted to ask?"

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He was bewildering her in another direction now. He was so cold, so almost rough; but this phase did not take her breath away. "I wanted to ask you to let me tell Mr. Creswick that——"

"What?"

"About us."

"Why, in Heaven's name?"

"Because he would not then have any hope of winning me."

Mark laughed. "Hope has never hurt anyone yet," he said; "and who knows but that he yet may win you? Remember the tortoise and the hare. Besides, what is there to tell 'about us'?"

"That is not fair." And Jane turned away. "And now please take me to cousin."

"To Mrs. Kennet."

"As you please." He was cruel—he knew that she was helpless, and he seemed to be taking advantage of this knowledge. If he loved her truly he could not have treated her so.

"You are looking very pale," Mrs. Kennet said.

"I'm tired," Jane answered.

For some time after this Jane saw Mark only in public. She was proving a social success, and with reserves, Mrs. Saunders was pleased. Much attention was paid the girl, and Creswick, always ready to fill any vacancy, ever quietly and unostentatiously at hand, built up in Jane's heart, in spite of the ever-present pain of deceiving him, a sense of dependence. Mark, on the contrary, always took sides with Mrs. Saunders and laughed and rallied Jane if she seemed embar-

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rassed, sometimes putting her into a fury of rebellion, but at the last limit of her endurance there would come a look that won her back, that quieted her like a charmed bird. The long years of submission had not fitted her to act with decision, to solve questions, and now that she had reached a point where there was no one to direct her, save Mark, whose directions were not in line with her ideas of truth and righteousness, she was unhappy. Sometimes she was almost ready to break all bounds and tell Mrs. Saunders. Once or twice Mrs. Saunders herself almost drove her to it by repeating some criticism that Mark had made on her; but something always held her back from this height of desperation. The trouble began to tell on her looks, however, and Mr. Saunders remarked on it; the girl was doing too much. But Mrs. Saunders pronounced his opinion far-fetched, and said that Lent would soon put an end to everything, and until then nothing could be changed. Besides other considerations, it was her ambition that Creswick should declare himself during this, the girl's first season; that Jane, her creation, should triumph in bearing away a much-sought-after *parti*, but, though his attentions were steady and hopeful, they were most unobtrusive, and his manner was so calm, so quiet, that she could not be certain even that he cared for the girl; and she would not for a great deal have at this moment touched the course of events.

But Mark, also, saw the change that was creeping over Jane's looks, and on one of the days at home came very early, earlier even than Creswick had come.

"Mrs. Saunders is not down," Simmons said.

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"How soon will she be down?"

"Not for an hour, sir."

"Miss Ormonde is down? I will see her, then; but on no account disturb Mrs. Saunders." And he walked in unannounced.

Jane started up. "I've come to see you," Mark said, quietly. "Simmons tells me that Mrs. Saunders will not be down for an hour; admirable! I'll have time to give you a carefully prepared lecture. Don't rattle the teacups; no sane man would take anything at this hour. I've come to beg forgiveness. I've tried you too much, and it is telling on your looks. What do you want me to do?"

Jane paused a moment. "I have never deceived anyone in my life," she said.

"Of course not; and I hope that you are not deceiving anyone now."

"Yes."

"Do you mean our little friendship? Impossible. I've not done anything more than Creswick has done. He has told you that he loves you. Have you told Mrs. Saunders? Of course not; then why tell her that I love you? There is no engagement between us any more than between you and Creswick. What would you tell her?"

"The cases seem quite different to me," Jane answered, slowly.

"Because you have not analyzed them, are not accustomed to analyzing, only to obeying. The only difference in the matter is that I love you ten thousand times better than Creswick, and that you love me; and

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if you tell now, we'll never see each other again. Would that make you happy?"

"You are not kind."

"Truth is seldom kind; but if it will make you contented to ruin me, why do it; I love you well enough even for that. I've asked Mrs. Saunders once already to let me marry you."

Jane looked up quickly.

"And she laughed. To please you, I will ask her again; but on one condition, that you will not open your lips on the subject. I will tell you her answer. I can tell it to you now; she will be angry; she may banish me entirely. Suppose I go away for a time, will that relieve your poor little conscience? God knows I see little enough of you; still, if you say so, I will go. But don't you think that my having asked her to let me marry you makes things straight? Could I do any more?"

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"I hoped that you trusted me; but now do things seem all right to you?"

"Righter."

"Not yet righteous?"

"You puzzle me so," Jane said, slowly. "You are so different. You do everything to disconcert me, then laugh at me because I am troubled."

"You simple little child, you are not more than ten years old, and I'm a brute. Forgive me, little one, and I'll behave better; but when a man is as madly in love as I am, and has to nail down the hatches, he must find some outlet somewhere, and I find it, I'm afraid, in try-

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ing to catch the different lights on my cherry. Besides, you make me so horribly jealous of Creswick. You look so quiet and contented while he is prosing in your ear, quite as if you had never lost your breath listening to me, quite as if you might like his twaddle the better of the two. What can I do but torment you? Men have been known to kill the women they loved, only because they loved them—I could do that.”

Jane drew back from his look; then rising quickly, walked away into the second room. Mark sat quite still for a moment, looking about him. The doors in the second room were all closed, and he followed Jane to where she stood smoothing the leaves of a palm.

“Are you, after all, a little flirt,” he said, standing close behind her, “that you walk away and leave me? Come into this room where all the doors are shut against the ears of the discreet Simmons.”

Jane looked around as if for flight.

“Child, why are you afraid of me? You torment a man’s soul almost out of his body with your timid, retreating ways. Some day you will test me too far, and I’ll do something desperate, and do it in public. Now I’m going to put one arm around you very gently—so—don’t cry!—and kiss you once—just once! There, go; positively you unhinge me, you tremble so. Come, come; I’ll make you a cup of tea—I’ll show you pictures—I’ll send Simmons for one of your dolls—I’ll do anything under Heaven to restore you. Sit on this sofa and I’ll sit opposite you and talk about the weather. I’m not laughing at you, I’m not teasing you, I swear it; I’m miserable for having terrified you; but who



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would expect a girl of to-day to go to pieces over one little kiss from the man she expects to marry? You are like a wild creature; how long will it take to tame you? Have you ever taken a fluttering, frightened bird into your hand, have felt how its heart throbbed almost to bursting its little breast, and gradually quieted it, soothed it, stroked it with one finger because it was so small, until at last it settled down, moved its little feet once or twice deep in the hollow of your palm, and finally nestled close, close to your hand on every side, peaceful and trusting?"

Jane drew a long, sobbing breath. "If I belonged to you," she said, "and everybody knew it, I don't think I'd be afraid."

"If 'cousin' knew? If 'cousin' should say, 'You belong to Mark——'"

"Cousin would say Mr. Witting——"

Mark laughed. "I beg pardon; perhaps she would—if she should say 'You belong to Mr. Witting, Jane; go and sit beside him, hold his hand, brush his shoes,' you'd do it quite joyfully? Now I've made you angry once more. I'll confess that I was trying to do it, child, in order to restore you; forgive me sufficiently to listen, and please, little one, to heed. I am playing a game, and I am playing for a high stake—yourself. I did not mean to play a game, I drifted into it; but now it has become so deep that I begin to be afraid of it. A more direct game, or no game at all, would have been better; but I'm afraid that I am a born gambler, and this is a most original plan. Be that as it will, I am in it and must now play it to a finish; but if you betray

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anything to anyone, you ruin me—you separate yourself from me. This finale may come through other means, but it is sure to come if you do not stand by me. Creswick loves you and is trying to win you; I love you and am trying to win you; and the only difference is that I have asked Mrs. Saunders to let me marry you, and Creswick has not; and yet you seem to feel no pain in your fair conscience about Creswick—why?”

“Because,” Jane answered slowly, as if weighing her words, “because his loving me is his secret; but my loving you is my secret.”

“Good! You have lots of sense, even if you are afraid of me; but do you tell ‘cousin’ everything?”

“I never tell cousin anything; but then I never hide anything, not since I was a little child and afraid, and she is free to know all that I do; but this is different; I am hiding this.”

Mark sighed impatiently. “Do as you please, then; tell it all and let me go—say—‘Good-by, Mark. I have never told cousin anything in my life, but I must tell her this even if it ruins you and separates us for ever; good-by. I am very conscientious and loyal, and though cousin is neither, I must, because of these virtues, sacrifice everything to her.’ And ‘cousin’ will call you an idiot, and laugh you to scorn. My child, let it go on for a few months, until the summer, and I will leave town indefinitely, and give you a rest; myself also; will this do? I won’t even try to see you again before I go; I will say good-by now.”

“And cousin?”

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"Cousin? O yes, I forgot." And there was a laugh in Mark's eyes. "I'll call on her especially, some morning when you are out of the way, and make my farewell. And I'll not send you a line all the while I'm gone; you cannot ask any more than that. Good-by, Miss Ormonde. I hope that you will enjoy the rest of the season. Good-by." And raising her hand to his lips, he laughed, bowed, and was gone.

The next morning he and Mrs. Saunders were in the second drawing-room. The doors were shut, as on the afternoon before, and she sat near the palm where Jane had stood, and Mark stood in front of her.

"This is rather sudden, is it not?"

"Everything I do is done suddenly. If you would let me be your cousin by marriage, things would be much simpler; and I thought you knew human nature too well ever to be jealous of a man's wife."

"You seem so eager about it."

"And why not? I must go now, however, if I mean to catch my train. Good-by."

"You will write to me, Mark? I see the letters first, you know."

"Perhaps."

"And when will you come back?"

"I don't know."

"And you will be at the Springs this summer?"

"I don't know. Good-by."

"You will tell me nothing?"

"Yes, one thing; it is fatal to try to deceive your servants. For some time Simmons has refused my financial favors; Joseph, his alternate at the door, is more modern, more civilized."

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"You've changed tremendously of late, Mark."

"I'm becoming very sick of myself; hope you won't suffer in the same way; it's as bad as sea-sickness. Good-by." He did not even shake hands, but walked out of the room and out of the house as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Saunders had risen, and stood quite still for a moment. She was very pale, and her hands were trembling. She had been foolish, as foolish as a girl, and now he was tired, he had changed. Of late he had been coming very seldom. Would it be wiser to let him marry the girl, make settlements on her and establish them at the other end of the town? Would it be wiser? Then when his aunt died. She began to walk up and down hurriedly. When his aunt died he would have the world at his feet, to go where he pleased; Jane would be richer than she! If Jane married Creswick she would be that; but that was quite different. To marry Creswick was to make a brilliant match; was to prove Mrs. Saunders a success; was to give Mrs. Saunders double prestige in society; was to get herself out of Mrs. Saunders's way. What an odd thing it was that she had realized so late that the girl would be in the way; that she had to wait for Mark Witting to reveal to her how greatly the girl chaperoned her; that she was still too charming a woman to need the magnet of youth at her side; that he—no, he had never told her that, had made no professions, save as to her attractions as a hostess, her looks, her manner. His words had seemed to mean more at the time; it had seemed that more, far more was on the verge of being

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said ; but now, in the light of his increasing sarcasm, his almost rudeness, now, when after this sudden shock of his going, she paused to count it all up, what he had said amounted to very little, to nothing at all. She was puzzled, she was troubled, she was afraid. It meant so much to her ; did it mean anything to him ?

Would it be wiser to let him marry the girl ? Could he possibly care for the girl ? He had never given a sign of it. Did the girl care for him ? She had seen no signs of that, either ; she would watch her now, and see if his going had any effect on her. And this very going, was it not to protect herself ? Simmons had been impertinent, but to dismiss him would be fatal ; so Mark had gone away to protect her from talk ; surely that showed some devotion. Suppose Mr. Saunders should—she turned white down to the lips. In that case, she would be afraid of him. And yet she had done nothing, nothing, nothing !

She was glad Mark had gone. He was wise ; perhaps it would be best to let him marry the girl. If she did all that he asked her to do, he would not speak sharply to her ; perhaps he would return to his earlier kindness, to his looks that meant so much, to the careless talk, when almost every word was double-shotted. She drew a long breath ; she had lived then ; she had lived for a little time after their coming to town, then slowly, almost imperceptibly, things had changed. Was he tired ? She could not tell now ; she would wait and see if he wrote to her, would watch Jane. When he came back she would show no wish to see him ; not for a moment suggest that he resume his

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visits. Meanwhile, suppose Creswick should win Jane?

Would it not be wiser to write to Mark to come back at once and marry the girl? She would have a permanent claim on him then. Up and down, up and down she walked until the clock chimed one. Jane would soon come in; her husband; she must go up-stairs.

## X

“How the world is made for each of us!  
How all we perceive and know in it  
Tends to some moment's product thus,  
When a soul declares itself—to wit,  
By its fruit, the thing it does!”

THE season was over. Lent, with its modified gayeties, its many services, had gone, and Mrs. Saunders, having been the head of a sewing-class, having done her share of afternoon services, having put on black and spent most of Good Friday on her knees in church, had at Easter sent flowers in every direction, and was now ready to run over to Paris for a few weeks' recreation before she opened the cottage at Hillside Springs.

Mark Witting had not come back, had not written one line, had gone out of their lives as completely as if he had never existed. Jane, trained through all her days to passivity, to the absence of knowledge as to the next move, brought this training to bear on the question of Mark's behavior, and accepted it in silence. She never spoke of him, she asked no questions concerning him, and when his name was mentioned it seemed to mean no more to her than any other name. In vain Mrs. Saunders watched her, and as in vain Mrs. Saunders wondered about Mark Witting. His

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death, or marriage, or return to town she would have heard, but this absolute silence was unaccountable.

She had been restless, and had thrown herself into everything with redoubled vigor. When Lent had come she had done everything that a woman in her position should do in Lent, becoming quite *exalté* by the end, quite risen to sublime heights, and had declared for Paris, saying that an irresistible longing for a great cathedral had overcome her. She spent most of the first week in Nôtre Dame, then making it quite plain that the necessities of Jane's summer outfit demanded her attention, she returned to her usual haunts of milliners and tailors.

The week before they were to leave Paris they were out driving and met Mark Witting. He also was driving, and with a woman. They were the width of the drive apart, and he seemed to have no eyes but for his companion. Mrs. Saunders started with a slight exclamation, and Jane looking in her turn, the light came slowly into her eyes.

"How strange that he did not see us," Mrs. Saunders said. "Henry must look him up, he will relieve the monotony."

But Mr. Saunders had no trouble, for the next day Mark called. He asked for Mrs. Saunders, and Jane was not sent for.

Mrs. Saunders held out both hands. "How did you know that I was here?" she asked.

"Saw you driving," and Mark dropped her hands. "Couldn't bow, you know; when a man's driven away from all he knows he must take up what he can find."



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"Mark!"

"You are not shocked, don't try to look it. How is Miss Ormonde?"

"Jane is always quite well. When do you return to America?"

"If you'll let me be your cousin by marriage I'll return with you."

"I've been thinking about it—thinking about it on my knees, Mark; all during Lent it was my prayer that I should be directed."

"And have you had a cable what to do?"

"Mark!"

"It is not half as bad as your praying over a case such as you think this is. I'm bad, but I don't deceive myself about it; you——"

"I am a poor starved heart—don't you see it?—yoked forever with dull, unanswering clay——"

"I'd break the yoke or bury the clay, one; but you love your world and you love yourself—don't interrupt me, I determined some time ago that if I ever saw you again I'd give you a plain talk."

"Ever saw me again, Mark?"

"I had almost made up my mind not to when I saw you driving, then you looked so very handsome—all those prayers have helped you—and my little bride looked so fair and tender——"

"You love the girl?"

Mark laughed. "To use some vulgar slang," he said, "I can 'get a rise out of you' whenever I like. May I come and dine with you to-night? Thanks. Now I must go on with my lecture quickly, for I have

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an engagement. And the first thing that I must insist on is that to me you do not pose as a good woman. You are not, you know; that is what attracted me, the—I am going to say something you'll pretend is dreadful—the cold-blooded devil I saw in your eyes. Take you out of your environment, and there is nothing you could not do, and would not do. Many women are like this, and they are always the most self-righteous. They bore me to death, however, when they pose as good women. There, that is a hard saying, but I had to say it. Try to get over it before dinner, and think of that marriage, and I will think of going home with you. You are sick all the way, though, and of course I could not come to see you. I'll send my messages by the little bride. By-by."

Mrs. Saunders sat quite still when he left her, with a strange, new expression coming on her face, a strange, new light gathering in her eyes. She looked as one who saw unexpected things, as one who had found freedom, had broken from a chrysalis. She smote her hands together softly. She rose quickly and shook herself as if she were throwing off trammels. The man had revealed her own soul to her. Marry the girl, of course he should, and there should be settlements and a house that would make him absolutely comfortable, and he should owe it all to her! But she would not tell him yet—not yet. She could hold him a little longer in uncertainty. He had called her bad. She paused a moment, then began a rapid walk, a swaying, creeping walk, like an animal in a cage, round and round the room. He had called her bad. She

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stopped suddenly and looked up, raised her hands as if calling high heaven to witness. "He has set me free," she said, in a low voice; "this is the truest moment of my life—I am bad!" One moment, then her arms dropped at her sides, and she breathed heavily. "I am crazy," she whispered, "crazy! I must be careful," and she rang the bell sharply.

"A glass of wine," she said to the servant, "and a biscuit, in my room."

The voyage home was one long dream to Jane. One year ago she had gone over the same course with Mark a stranger, now Mr. Saunders played his cards incessantly, for Mark was always there to take Jane off his hands, and Mrs. Saunders, down-stairs, was handed a little note every day by the stewardess.

"I've asked her again to let me marry you," Mark said to Jane, "and she promised to think about it."

"Did she?" and Jane looked up at him with wonder in her eyes.

"She did, so you need have no further torments on the subject; but if you look at me like that, little one, I'll pick you up and jump overboard with you. You have the faculty of running me crazy as no other woman has ever had it. I don't understand it."

"Mr. Creswick says that I have charm."

"Damn Creswick!—I beg pardon, but how dare he talk to you like that?"

"Just as you dare to talk to me."

"So, so, how spirited it is!"

"That is why I begged you to let me tell Mr. Creswick."

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"No, you must not tell Creswick—not yet. I want to tell him myself; I want the pleasure of giving him that bit of news. He has everything in the world that I want and have not, and all the mothers have been running after him. He has always treated me with a politeness so distant that almost I needed a field-glass to see it and him at the end of it. I want, with the same long-distance courtesy, to tell him that I am going to marry you; that I am going to take from him the one pearl of great price for the possession of which he would give all his fortune. To marry you will be joy and happiness unspeakable, and, after this, a great triumph over Creswick, and, further still, an endless joke on 'cousin.' If there is one thing that she has set her heart on it is your marrying Creswick—your making a brilliant match. I am not a brilliant match; I am not rich—I may be some day, but it is doubtful, and she knows it. But Creswick is all that her heart desires."

"I could not marry him," and Jane shook her head; "I do not love him."

Mark laughed. "You would do just that but for my interference. You could no more thwart Mrs. Saunders than you could fly to the moon, and angel though you be, darling, your wings have not sprouted yet."

"I could not do it," Jane repeated.

"You would walk to the altar just as any other lamb, and the position would have its compensations. Creswick would adore you, would keep Mrs. Saunders in her place, for he does not at all admire her, and

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you'd have the distinct delight of seeing her treat you with deference, you could even reduce her to cringing——”

“I beg that you will hush,” Jane interrupted, sharply; “I cannot bear to hear it, not only because you are speaking of cousin in a way that I must not permit, but also because it is not worthy of you—it is not noble.”

“Noble,” Mark repeated, slowly, “no, I am not noble. Noble means to rise above injury and injustice—the knight who raises his fallen enemy; the man who fires into the air; the man who keeps a promise to his own hurt—no, I am not noble. I wait until I can with profit to myself hit my enemy, and then I hit him very hard. This was the primitive way, this is the modern way, this is the successful way, this is the world's way. I am a true child of this world, little one, and this world is not noble.”

“I don't believe you.”

“Thank you; people seldom believe you when you tell the truth. It is the truth; at the same time I'll promise to live up to your ideals whenever it is possible—whenever I won't lose money by it,” and he laughed as he bent forward to look into her eyes.

Jane would have been satisfied if that voyage could have continued indefinitely. From morning until night Mark was beside her; the weather was perfect, the whole ship's company were, and continued to be, strangers. The last day, when Mrs. Saunders reappeared, came all too soon, and the absolute change that came always into Mark's manner whenever she

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was present. It was distressing to the girl, as much because it looked like deception as anything else; but he had prepared her for it. "We must not let 'cousin' think that we have arranged anything," he said, "for she does not like anyone to have a finger in her pies; she likes to make them, and bake them, and sugar them all herself, else she will throw them away. This is one of her peculiarities to which we must bow. She must not think that we have done anything through all this long and lovely voyage but talk about the weather and regret her absence. She must feel that she is the sun of my universe, whose rising and setting I watch with ardor; that she is the arbiter of my fate, who is to ladle out to me my future pleasure. And don't say that we shall be deceiving her; we will not; if she is so unknowing as to believe all these things that is her look out; besides, it is not the thing for lovers to seem to care for each other in public; she and Mr. Saunders never spoon where anyone can see them," and Mark laughed; "added to which," he went on, "it will give her great pleasure to play fairy godmother. Have you not discovered that 'cousin' wants all the taffy going, that she always wants an audience? She works harder for taffy than most people do for bread—her vanity is colossal. If you had not been above it, you could have flattered her out of anything she had, and into anything you wanted; but then I should not have loved you. We always love our opposites."

So he had talked, and when Mrs. Saunders came on deck Mr. Saunders resumed his place at Jane's side,

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a fact that absolutely hurt the girl. He should never have gone to play cards, or he should have continued to play cards. As it was she must seem to connive, she must walk as of old with Mr. Saunders, and she began to realize that tacitly she and Mr. Saunders had been for years deceiving Mrs. Saunders. Her feeling was almost that Mrs. Saunders needed protection; her impulse was to go and tell her everything, warn her against everyone. Mark was lifting the curtain of the life about her, and she did not like what she saw, she was struggling not to believe what she saw. She hated that her Cousin Henry was proving all that Mark insinuated about people; she hated that Mark should make such insinuations. It was only for a few hours, however, that she had to bear it, then Mark said good-by to them on the docks, promising to meet them at the Springs.

For the first time in her life Jane experienced a sensation of home-coming. The house in New York had never seemed like home to her—too many memories of her early misery dwelt there; but the house at Hill-side Springs seemed to welcome her, seemed to remind her that she had been happy there. What a strange sensation to want to jump out of the carriage and run up the path to the steps; how new that she should want to rush from place to place and see if everything was as it had been; how hard that she had to go up-stairs and dress for dinner. But to be so happy that she had to control it was so remarkable that she was almost content to sit still and realize it. And the next morning how beautiful the country sun-

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shine was, how early she was up and out, how glad the dogs were to rush after her, Geist, who seemed distinctly to remember the bench in the thick of the protecting shrubbery. At breakfast, where Mrs. Saunders never appeared, Mr. Saunders looked at her in some surprise. "How bright you look," he said, "as bright as when I used to give you candy-money."

Jane looked up at him slowly, and a shadow from her lonely childhood seemed to come over the day. "Candy-money," she repeated.

"I used to wonder if you loved money," Mr. Saunders went on.

"I have that money now," Jane answered; "but I don't love money. I had found out that father and mother were poor, and at that age poor meant starving, and I was saving it, hoping to get enough to go home and help them."

"And you did not tell me? I knew that something was wrong; your eyes used to trouble me. If you had told me, I would have explained. Poor little child!"

Jane drew a sharp breath. "It's over and gone," she said, quickly, "and I am happy now." Of course she was happy, and nothing should mar it. All the cottagers were back, Simmons had reported, and the hotels were filling rapidly; Mr. Creswick had come, and Mr. Witting. Of course it would all be as it had been, she would pick up the threads of the old life just where she had laid them down, and weave them into a happier, more perfect whole. There were flowers for her from Creswick, and for Mrs. Saunders from



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Mark Witting. She looked at his card a moment; a part of his mysterious plan, she supposed. All should be as it had been, and she went out to the bench. Presently Mark would jump the side fence and come up through the shrubbery.

The snap of the front gate and Geist's bark came simultaneously, and going to the opening in the shrubbery she saw Laurence Creswick coming across the grass. Her heart sank a little, but he found no fault with her greeting. "I very nearly came to breakfast," he said, laughing, and sat down on the bench as of old. "Are you glad to come back?"

"I have never been so glad to be anywhere before," Jane answered.

"Good; and you are looking so well. Did you enjoy Paris?"

"Paris means only clothes, you know."

"And you had a pleasant voyage?"

"Yes."

"And I need not try to tell you how I have missed you, and how glad I am to see you?"

Jane shook her head, smiling a little. "I wonder you are not tired of saying such things to me."

"I wonder you are not tired of trying to discourage me. It's no use, you know. It's going on until you marry someone else; after that I shall be your friend just the same as ever, until some day you will need me."

"I don't deserve it, you know."

"I have had rather a lonely life," he went on, as though she had not spoken; "I was an only child,

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and very soon an orphan. My grandmother was good to me, but most of my life has been spent at schools and colleges. All this means that I have lived much within myself, and living within myself I have formed ideals. Perhaps you may call me romantic, you may even reduce me to the level of sentimentalism, but I've known always that I could not love but once. Do you remember the description of how Milton revered the poet within himself, how his whole life was kept pure with this end in view? That is what I've always felt about the love I had to offer the woman I should marry."

"Then you would want to be a woman's first and only love."

"Yes; but I have faith that my love, kept so single, would not fasten itself to a heart that was not true, even though it might fasten itself to a heart that had not just my ideals. In these matters girls are rather helpless, you know; I've watched a great many of them, and I'm sorry for them. The best chance, I think, is for a girl to love her mother and to have faith in her father."

"And I have not known my father and mother——"

"Hullo! Oh!" and Mark Witting stood before them. "How are you, Miss Ormonde—and Creswick. Is Mrs. Saunders visible yet? May I go to the house and inquire? Thanks. Good-by."

"Mrs. Saunders likes him very much?" Creswick queried when Mark had gone.

"I believe so."

"He's an odd mixture. He's a great deal at my

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grandmother's house because of his aunt, who comes there every summer, so of course I see something of him; but I've never known him very well."

"You are very different."

"Very," Creswick answered, promptly, then the talk languished, and he rose.

"Have you made any plans for the day?" he asked.

Jane shook her head. "Cousin does that, you know."

"Yes? I'll come in again then."

"And I have not thanked you for the beautiful flowers I found," and the color surged up in Jane's face. She felt guilty because she was not grateful, because she was glad that he was going.

"They greeted you for me, that was all they were meant to do. Good-by."

She put the backs of her hands to her cheeks; they burned like fire, they burned still more hotly when she heard the gate shut; a little while went by, then Mark stood in the opening, laughing at her.

"Run him away, have I; glad I'm such a scarecrow. Tip-toed into the house, fearing to disturb 'cousin,' sat withdrawn in the parlor until I saw King Midas go away. 'All things come to him who waits.' You'll kiss me, won't you, because you are glad to see me? How sweet you look; 'cousin' dresses you like a dream—true; and you are not going to be uneasy and unhappy this summer, because, you know, I've asked for you, and 'cousin' is thinking about accepting me as a cousin by marriage. Soon it will be all settled, and I'll be giving Creswick that one between the eyes."

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"If you love me, you will not hurt Mr. Creswick."

"So? We'll have to think about that; but I'm afraid I will have to give him one for presuming to love you. Thank you, Geist, for that little bark. Wonder who's coming now—so, the discreet Joseph."

"Mrs. Saunders wishes to speak to you, Miss Jane."

Jane rose quickly, every trace of color leaving her face. "Very well, Joseph," and the man turned away. "You will excuse me?" she said to Mark.

"I'll come with you." Jane hesitated. "On my own responsibility," and Mark laughed. "I'm not afraid of 'cousin,'" he said, "nor need you be in such a mix. A bold front always scares a bully. Come on. How do you do, Mrs. Saunders. I've been waiting for you, for—" and he shook hands with her almost too heartily—"for hours. How late you are; and I've made myself so disagreeable that I've run Creswick away, quite away, and have terrified Miss Ormonde. Don't you ever come down until eleven? Will know better next time; but what I came for was to ask for the day's plans, the week's plans, and if I might be one of them."

"Of course. But, Jane, I sent for you about those alterations that Colby must make in your blue crêpe; she's waiting now. Mr. Witting will excuse you."

"What a lamb she is," Mark commented when Jane was gone, "and how deadly afraid she is of you."

Mrs. Saunders's eyes flashed. "I found her to be both obstinate and secretive when she was a child," she answered, "and I have had to watch her ever since; she would never have told me that you had been

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in the arbor, and you seem to have found a new way over the side fence?"

"Short cut; I could not get here quickly enough; as it is I found the bride talking to another man. Did you watch long enough to see that I came directly on to the house?"

"And did not ring. What did you do?"

"Sat in the parlor and waited; did not have the courage to stir up Simmons. Do you know that I'm becoming very tired of this sort of thing, and am contemplating another disappearance?"

Mrs. Saunders moved uneasily. "A long engagement would be trying," she said; "we must announce it in September—if I agree to it."

Mark laughed.

"And you can be married early in October, and we'll join you in Paris and come home together in December."

"If you agree to it," Mark said; "you must decide that in twenty-four hours."

"If you will accept my terms I will decide it now."

"Your terms?"

"That you do not address Jane until September, and that you will do as I have said about the marriage in October and the tour and return in December."

"And let Creswick have his innings all summer?"

"Do you care enough for the girl to be jealous?"

"I hate Creswick."

"The longer Creswick's innings, the more severe his defeat."

"There is something in that. Very well, I agree;

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but I am not going to repeat last winter. You may not think it, but I have a little self-respect; besides, not to be pleased with myself bores me; added to that, I am not pleased with you this morning for interfering, so I'm going. Good-by. It is unwise to let a man know when you are trying to manage him; and things that happen are more interesting than things that are arranged. Good-by."

It was a strange summer to Jane, and many things that were done seemed to have no motive to cause them, no meaning to give them weight. Mark did not come so often in the morning as he had done the summer before; his temper was most uneven, and sometimes he was almost rude to Mrs. Saunders, and as strange was it that Mrs. Saunders made no sign of seeing it. The season was as gay, the weather was as fine, the people were as pleasant, but somehow her dream of happiness for this summer was clouded, and in a measure it seemed to be Mark's fault. Mrs. Saunders, too, was different, an indefinable difference. She was pleasanter to everyone than to Jane, to her she was more openly sarcastic, more exacting than ever before; sometimes she seemed to be almost vindictive, and Jane, refusing to condemn either of these two, was a little bit bewildered. It was disappointing, it was wearing; but comparative peace came in August, when Mark took himself off to Newport to keep an engagement, and when, a little later, Mrs. Saunders went to town to look after something she wished to have done in the house—she must see to it herself, she said,

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It was very peaceful then, and Jane took herself to task that she found it so. It was not long, however—only three days—before Mrs. Saunders came back, but Creswick declared to himself that even in that little time Jane had gained both in flesh and color. Mrs. Saunders, too, came back in a happier mood, and the calm continued. The days and the weeks rolled on, and August was drawing to a close, when, without warning, a mysterious, unaccountable break came.

Mark Witting had returned, appearing suddenly, standing laughing before Jane as she sat in the arbor. Light flashed into her eyes, color into her cheeks, and she rose quickly.

“So glad?” he said, and put his hands on her two shoulders. “Have you missed me, little one, little violet? I have walked in many rose-gardens, darling, and have gathered more flowers than ever I wanted, but never has any flower so held me, so charmed me, so made me long to be better, so made me loathe myself, as my little violet, and for none, child, would I have done what I have done to win you.” His voice was strangely grave for him, and Jane looked up anxiously. “And I’m so glad to be here again,” he went on, “that I’m a little bit afraid of myself. Three days of my absence I was in town, haggling with importunate creditors—nasty! But I am poor, you know, and poor men are always in debt. ‘I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed,’ so I’ve been compromising—vile! Don’t look at me so, I’ll go perfectly mad-crazy.”

His hands were still on her shoulders, and she had moved so that her back was to the opening, and as

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the clear, unshaded light fell on his face, Jane started. "You look ill," she said; "what is the matter? You are worn, you are haggard."

"Never better in my life," Mark answered. "It's just the devil that's in me has been drawing lines on my face. I'm bad, you know, very bad; and I've been hating myself so desperately lately that I am losing my looks. And those creditors, remember, and accepting help where I despised it, putting myself in bonds, as it were, paying for my past pleasures, that in the light of your eyes, little one, make a sorry show. No, I am well, and once let our affairs be settled and I will be a better man—I will, indeed."

"You are not so very bad—no—for you are good to your aunt."

Mark laughed. "Don't let us go into my virtues, dear, they won't bear a microscope. I'm not worthy of you, never will be; but if love can cleanse, some day I will be clean, and, please God, it won't be long. My plans are moving swiftly to their close, and then—I'm so glad, I'm afraid, I'm just a little bit dizzy with the thought of it. I love you, O child, never believe but that I love you—never! I'm afraid to touch you now any more than this, afraid to greet you any more than to look into your eyes; but soon, very soon, you don't know how soon, darling, we'll be away—away——"

Something made him look up. He drew Jane close, hiding her face in his breast; he laughed, not a pleasant laugh, then the vision he saw, two flaming eyes set in a livid, drawn face, disappeared. He was trembling all over now, and Jane drew away from him.



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"You are ill!" she said; "sit down." He obeyed, and the girl starting away, he caught her hand.

"Don't go," he said, brokenly, "it will be over in a minute; just a little turn—don't go, don't speak." His head drooped on his breast, and Jane, silent and terrified, watched him with such a pain at her heart as she had never dreamed of before. Presently she had to sit down, and for a long time, an endless time it seemed to her, they stayed there in absolute silence. At last Mark drew a long sigh, a sigh so deep that it seemed as if his life must go out with it. His hold on the girl's wrist relaxed, let go, and his own hand was thrust into his breast. Slowly he straightened himself, but with his face turned away.

"It's all right now," he said at last, still looking away from Jane; then he drew out his watch. "Time's up," and he rose. He was looking at her now, differently from what he had ever done. "Do you think that I could see Mrs. Saunders?" he asked, "just to greet her—'twould be civil, you know."

"Are you well enough?"

"Quite; only a little turn. At this moment I feel as if I could charge a battery, could fight a whole regiment all by myself. So I'll face 'cousin'; her gig-lamp eyes are worse than a battery. I hate dark eyes. Will you show me the way?"

Into the house, where Jane stayed with Mark until Simmons came to say that Mrs. Saunders would be down in a moment, then Jane turned away. "I'll go," she said, "it will save cousin the trouble of sending me."

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"Yes, her account in that kind of lie must be heavy."

"Hush!" then Jane was gone, meeting Mrs. Saunders in the hall.

"Why do you go?" she asked, and the look in her eyes made Jane wonder.

"Mr. Witting came to see you," she answered. "Shall I come back?"

"Why, do you suppose that I need you—ever need you?" then she swept on, and Jane, going slowly up to her room, felt a tardy rebellion rising within her—scorn such as this she could not stand.

Very softly, but very closely Mrs. Saunders shut the drawing-room door behind her, then stood still before Mark.

"Good-morning," he said, smiling; "I must apologize for not speaking to you when you so gratuitously peeped into the arbor, but it would not have been to your credit, you know."

"I am surprised at your audacity in speaking to me at all," she answered.

"I can scarcely believe that; but please sit down, it is so much more restful to converse sitting down, and, if I mistake not, we have a few things to settle."

Her eyes were flashing, her close-shut lips were white, she breathed heavily.

"You will want to ask me some questions," Mark went on. "Do I love the girl? heretofore I've answered, 'What a question to ask?' meaning that your own eyes should have told you that no man in his senses could help loving such a charming flower; now I answer truly, Yes, I love the girl, and of course that

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precludes all thought of your allowing the marriage. I have loved her from the very first. We were together through two sea-voyages. I shall never forget them, forget the sunshine and the wind, the wide seas and wandering waves, and the little curls that blew across her forehead, got into her pretty eyes. Last summer I was with her every morning while you were with your physician. I am awfully sorry for the physicians of fashionable women. Every morning I came. Simmons knew, that is why he was impertinent last winter; he was quite in the right. Last winter? Last winter was so long, was trying, but we had some dances—ye gods! How close she was to me, how her heart beat, how shy she was of any touch, any tone, any look that in any degree expressed my feelings. And I went away that spring for her sake; she was tormented because you did not know; she wanted to tell you. You are amazed? All this going on under your very eyes, within reach of your hand? Control yourself, and I will explain. I advise you to control yourself. A scene will be perfectly useless, and most undignified, and Simmons might hear; Joseph may be at a key-hole.” His voice, that for a moment had been full of vibrations, had become laughing, and his eyes seemed to sparkle with amusement.

“To make my explanation clear I must go back behind all these beautiful memories that will never die, and for which I thank you; you like people to be grateful, don’t you? To go back: Mrs. Kennet told my aunt, everybody told my aunt, that the girl was your adopted daughter, your heiress, and my aunt

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being canny at once directed her steps to see you, and brought me. She prepared me by telling me that she remembered the girl as a child, and that you did not let her call her soul her own; that she was a passive instrument in your hands, and that such passivity through so many years should have made the girl an idiot; all this meant that I must first, having no certain pecuniary expectations, placate you. Instead of an idiot I found a girl with a face full of character, a heart full of misplaced loyalty, beautiful eyes full of thought, and the most marvellous self-control. And let me pause to warn you that she will not stay in your hands forever. I was instantly attracted, and we came over on the same ship." He paused, looking down on the floor. "Glorious! how soft her little chin was when I buttoned her coat——"

"You seem to have taken, and she to have permitted, great liberties," Mrs. Saunders interrupted.

Mark looked at her slowly, and she quailed under his eyes. "You came here," he went on after a moment, "your plan was for Creswick; you amused me, but I meant no evil. I saw at once, however, that to win the girl I'd have to win you first, and, thinking you of age to take care of yourself, I drifted into this nasty snarl. As soon as my amiable aunt saw that I was really in love with the girl, she informed me that I must not depend on her, nor must I hurt the girl if I wanted to inherit. The plan came to me bit by bit, to keep you so interested that you would let me marry the girl. What is it Balzac says about the last love of a woman? Of course as soon as the marriage

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settlements should be signed I would have told you that all along I had loved you in a platonic way, as a comrade. You remember you spoke of me as a comrade? And if those damned creditors had not crowded me the other day, and you had not saved me by that loan, I'd defy you and take the child away."

Mrs. Saunders drew a long breath, and an unpleasant smile came on her lips, and she said, slowly: "But the creditors did crowd you, and the loan was large, and, remembering it, what will you do?"

Mark's eyes flashed. "Don't anger me," he said, quickly; "remember, I can take the girl away in spite of the loan, and you'd not be able to lift a finger."

"And then—starve?"

"With her I should not mind even that, but I have a sentiment against stealing your money. Instead, I will go away, not too suddenly, and write the usual rot about change of feelings."

"You really are fine, Mark."

"Did you hope for the pleasure of hearing me rave, of hearing me plead for mercy—mercy from you? Knowing you, I've always counted on this possibility, so was partly prepared as to what I should do. But one thing you are to remember, if you are unkind to the child, if you add one jot or one tittle to her pain, you shall suffer. Never fear but you will suffer, and at my hands. You cannot set the law on me, you know, too many questions would occur to Mr. Saunders. I have no mercy on you, because you do not deserve mercy. I don't think that you have ever been good, or tender, or true; self-centred people never are.

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All that you have done has been done for the praise of this world; flattery is the breath of life to you, and to get it you have pretended to much. I've had no compunctions in deceiving you, because you never hesitate to deceive; you've deceived yourself for so long that you have come at last to believe in yourself. As for your husband, I'm not sure that he is as blind as you think. He is tired, so he evades you as the easiest thing to do. But the girl—poor child, poor child; it is all so cruel. Many times I've wondered why a just God should have permitted such a helpless, sensitive soul as hers to come into such hands as yours and mine. She is being saved at last, but through what suffering. How could she need purifying fires? I'll give her up as cruelly and brutally as is possible; it will be all that I can do for her, God bless her! It will not need to be very coarse brutality either, even a little thing that is not noble will cure her of the pain of loving me; but as I have said, you are to keep your hands off. If I ever hear that you have done other than this I swear that I'll go straight to Mr. Saunders. And another thing, I have not soiled her ears with any hint of this ugly snarl; in her eyes you are as intact as ever you have been. I'll come to dinner this evening to keep up appearances, but do not have Creswick to meet me—I should be sorely tempted to kill him on the way home. And you will observe how magnanimous I have been, I have asked you no questions, have not investigated your feelings, have not reviled you for eavesdropping and peeping. *Au revoir,*" and allowing Mrs. Saunders no further word, he opened the door and left her.

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So it was that the break came, and of course Jane could not understand it. The summer had been troubled from the first because of the changes in Mrs. Saunders, and now Mark began to change. The day after his arrival he came to the arbor again; he was plainly out of sorts, was moody and silent, and behaved strangely, too. After he had been there some time he lifted his head as if listening, he went to the opening and looked up at the house, and she thought that he waved his hand. Was he losing his mind?

He talked strangely, too. "I'm a bad man," he said, "a false, black-hearted man; I'm not worth one sigh, one tear. The other day in town I sank so low that I lost all my self-respect, and I don't deserve your love, your confidence. I should not touch the outermost fold of your longest, widest gown," and softly and slowly he put away from him her hand that he had taken. After this he sat staring out of the opening for a long time, and when at last she spoke he answered her sharply.

"Ill, of course not; you women are so concrete that to hear you one would think there was nothing but the body to be considered. Ill, yes, but of life; sick, yes, but of everything and everybody. Save that there is a person in this world whom I wish to torment, I'd go at once and commit suicide."

His tone was so bitter, his eyes so gloomy that Jane drew back.

"You are quite right," he went on, "draw away from me as far as possible, as far as you would from a leper."

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"I did not mean it in that way."

"Don't explain yourself, child, I read you like a book, a book too good for me. You never mean to do wrong, or to think wrong, or to hurt a living soul—I know all that, and," leaning toward her, holding her face steady with his two hands, looking at her with devouring eyes, "don't let anyone know when you are hurt—hear? I'm hurting you, I shall hurt you more, I may wound you almost to death—'Some of you'll live, but most of you'll die,' remember? With a false nature like mine you can never tell; but whatever happens don't show your pain, not even to me. This is one of life's little lessons. If you hear of me dead, with a bullet or a dose, don't wince. I charge you, no tears, and if you must be pale, rouge. Red ribbon and cologne will do it. I'm not worth a tear, but you will want to shed them; nor a pale cheek, but you will let yours blanch. When you go into lunch be gay. You think that I am crazy? You are right. I'll go now. I may not come to-morrow." He rose quickly. "Remember what I say. Stay here until you are quiet, and at lunch—everywhere—seem cheerful, seem happy." Once in the opening his whole look changed. He smiled brightly and kissed his hand to her.

Jane sat quite still. Once she had sat there to recover from the joy of his love; now she was afraid to think, she was afraid of she knew not what. Who was it that would watch to see her suffer, who would be glad of her pain? And why need she suffer, what was going to happen, why need he hurt her?—really and truly because he was so false? No, he loved her,



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he loved her. But her vamped up cheerfulness went for naught, for Mrs. Saunders did not appear, and Mr. Saunders had his papers.

She was glad that Creswick came for her to play golf that afternoon, but surprised that Mrs. Saunders ordered the carriage and took them out. Mrs. Saunders did not play, but followed them everywhere, and Mark Witting, who was out there, insisted on being Jane's caddy.

"I've joined the Christian Endeavorers," he said, "and I must do one kind act every day; I'll caddy for Miss Ormonde, and let Creswick, poor as I am, give my just dues to that brown, greedy boy yonder who longs to murder me for seeming to deflect his income. Pay him at once please, Creswick, and send him away. I am humbling myself, too, for I don't think that anyone wants me here, except perhaps Mrs. Saunders. She is always kind and charitable, always going out into hedges and things hunting for poor humanity; added to this, she is blind to wrong things, even though they may be under her very eyes."

Creswick laughed. "If you talk so much," he said, "we'll never get round."

"There it is again," Mark went on, "snubbed, and by a gold-mounted worldling; so it ever is with earnest piety—good! How you have improved, Miss Ormonde—fine! We will go to that ball, come; will Mrs. Saunders come, too?—of course. It's pleasant trailing over the grass in the sunshine, pleasanter than ever before—blessings brighten as they take their flight, and I may have to 'flight' to town. Think of it, that dreary

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town in early September! This it is to be an orphan. If only I had a father to toil all the year round in a hot office I'd be in better case, and would not have to run business errands for my aunt. I feel a great admiration for the old Spartan way of having an age limit—think how much more currency would be sent floating about the world if my aunt's fortune were in my hands! As it is, I run errands, I compromise my debts, and barter my soul. Soul is an immaterial thing; still, so long as it is the fashion to think of it as a valuable possession, I'd like to keep mine and be in the fashion. But I am losing everything; I soon shall be bankrupt, very soon; but someone says—is it the devil or a Frenchman—that 'crooked sticks make a straight fire,' see? I shall find my vocation in that nice warm place that the pious have built for the people whom they do not like."

Jane was distressed. She could not understand this new kind of nonsense; she could not understand Mrs. Saunders's manner either; her determined following of Mark and herself; her smiles, that were so lacking in all signs of amusement; her unusual silence. She tried to stay with Creswick, and he, catching one look from her eyes that expressed far more than she knew, made a point after this of keeping his ball with hers, and at the last insisting on her walking home.

"You must let her walk with me, Mrs. Saunders," he said, quietly, and Mrs. Saunders acquiescing, Mark Witting laughed and took out his watch.

"I'm sorry that I'll not be able to stay for tea," he said, "but time's up; the unprotected orphan must

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go now, at once. Pleasant walk, pleasant drive to you," and he left them.

Tea did not last long, then Mrs. Saunders drove away, and Jane and Creswick went slowly homeward across the hills, she thankful for the quiet walk, he longing more than ever to take her away from the surroundings that seemed so alien to her.

For two or three days Jane did not see Mark; then one morning he came into the arbor, reluctantly, it seemed, and after a few moments suggested that they should go to the house, should sit on the piazza, the chairs there were so much more comfortable than the bench.

"Why, yes," Jane answered, and they astonished Mr. Saunders by joining him. Creswick, passing stepped in, and Mark proposed cards, and Mrs. Saunders, appearing later, found a cheerful quartette.

The next morning Jane went out as usual to the arbor, Creswick had said that he would bring a new book. His reading aloud left her free to puzzle, to try to account for Mark's peculiar behavior, for Mrs. Saunders's sudden cessation of speech to her. She was never spoken to now, save in the presence of a third person, and there was a light in Mrs. Saunders's eyes that roused in Jane a feeling that she must demand an explanation, and yet how could she demand anything of Mrs. Saunders? So the reading was a rest to her.

Through the still air Creswick's voice travelled far, travelled to the road, and Mark Witting paused in his passing. The color left his face, then came back with

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a rush. He set his teeth, stopped a second as if deliberating, then vaulted the fence. He looked up to the windows of the house, deliberately scanning each one as, with his hands in his pockets, he walked slowly across the grass. Presently his look fastened on one window, and he smiled insolently. At the opening in the arbor he paused, taking off his hat. "Deeply interested?" he asked.

"Yes," Jane answered; "won't you sit down and listen? Or if you want a comfortable chair," and she actually smiled a little looking up at him, "you will find Cousin Henry on the piazza."

An amused look came into Mark's eyes, that had such marks of weariness about them. How well the child did it, how more than ever he loved her. "I hoped for another game of cards," he said.

Jane shook her head. "I'm too busy to-day," she answered. "All summer I've been on this one piece of embroidery, and I must finish it."

"Will you give it to me?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

Mark sat down beside her and took the work into his hands. "This is not the conventional passion-flower piece," he said; "I'd rather have that."

"Then you will have to ask cousin," and Jane smiled; "that was hers."

"True? Then I'd rather have this one. You have done it out here in the arbor, haven't you? So of course have worked all the summer into it. I see a likeness to Creswick in it, and to myself, and to Geist, and to the arbor—yes, I must have this, and some

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time when I am far away it will do the magic-rug act and bring me back to this spot and to all my friends. Give it to me?"

"I never dreamed of doing so useful a piece of embroidery."

"When will it be done?"

"In a little while if you will give it back to me, then it must be pressed and cut out."

"Not at all, I want it just as it is, fresh from your hands, with those hoops in it, too." A little vehemence had come into his voice, and Creswick looked at him coldly.

"I'll come back for it before I go," Mark went on, "and you must give it to me just as it stands; and please leave the needle sticking in the last stitch, which must not be stitched. There's a pathos in unfinished things, a mystery. You remember Michael Angelo's statues in San Lorenzo, where those unfinished faces look at you from out the stone? A parable of life. You remember how I laughed at your books on the steamer that first voyage, those finished books, where all the characters come together at the last, and the Mary-Anns marry the Peters, and the Maudes marry the Arthurs, and all the fathers walk about with three or four children on their shoulders, and all the mothers sit under apple-trees and smile—all the villains being dead, of course, and all the villainesses having been converted and become violent reformers and presidents of asylums and cruelty-to-butterflies societies? Absurd; 'tis not so in life, we only catch glimpses, and we know that real tragedy only begins

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with matrimony. No, give me the mystery and possibility of unfinished things, give me that embroidery with that last stitch untaken. Good-by—I'll come back for it."

There was a moment's silence when he left them, then Jane, smoothing her work, said: "Please go on, Mr. Creswick."

"And you will give it to him?" Creswick asked.

"Yes, why not?" and she smiled. "Please go on." And all through Creswick's reading, all through her own confusion and pain, she could hear Mark's voice on the piazza, his laugh that seemed to jar, then Mrs. Saunders's voice coming in later. Steadily she stitched, steadily Creswick read, carefully and well until the end. The story was finished, and he closed the book. Jane looked up as if surprised, then seemed to come back from a great distance. "Finished?" she asked.

"Yes; is the last stitch arrived at?"

"One moment, then we'll go and give it to him," and Jane did not observe the significant fact that Creswick asked no questions as to the book, suggested no discussion.

"The last stitch," she said presently, and carefully stuck the needle in. "It does look pathetic," and Creswick saw that her hands trembled. He did not understand, but as she bade him he followed her to the house. They did not speak as they crossed the grass, their footsteps made no sound, they seemed to appear suddenly, and Mark sprang to his feet. Mrs. Saunders smiled, and Jane looked up from where she was mounting the steps.

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"I've finished," she said, "all save that last stitch, and I've brought it to you." There was a smile on the girl's lips and a quiet dignity in her look that made Creswick's heart bound with pleasure, but it was perhaps fortunate that Jane did not see the look in Mrs. Saunders's eyes, instead she was looking straight at Mark, and holding the work out to him.

He took it slowly; he did not look up. "The last stitch that will never be taken," he said.

Mr. Saunders had risen, and stood looking over Mark's shoulder. "What in the world are you talking about?" he asked.

"I'm giving that work to him," Jane answered, "and he asked me not to finish it."

"You've left two stitches," and Mark handed the work back to her; "please take one where I can see you, and stick the needle in the other."

Her hands were not trembling now, not even to Creswick's watchful eyes, and she took the stitch carefully, then pushing the needle into the last stitch, with the same precision, she again held it out, smiling.

"Thank you," then Mark folded it carefully. "I've left the touch of your hand inside, you see," and for the first time he met Jane's eyes. How proud she looked, how well she was doing it, and he turned and smiled down on Mrs. Saunders. Jane looked, too, then turned quickly away, and the party broke up.

## XI

“ Knowledge by suffering entereth.”

JANE was holding a note somewhat as if it burned her fingers. All mail matter went first to Mrs. Saunders, at least that was the order; but without a word on either side, Simmons used his own discretion as to Jane's letters and notes, and this missive had been brought to her quietly just after breakfast.

She had had a number of notes from Mark Witting, but they had been brought always by a messenger; they had been always in a certain kind of very fine envelope; this one was quite different. It was in a very uncompromising stamped envelope, and had come by post. She had looked at it a moment as it lay on the tray, then up at Simmons.

“ It came by the mail, Miss Jane,” he said.

“ Thank you.”

“ If there is any answer, Miss Jane,” Simmons went on, “ I'm at your service, Miss.”

“ You are very good, Simmons.” Then she took her way up-stairs. Half-way she paused; Mrs. Saunders was not dressed, so could not come to the arbor, while Jane's room was just down the hall. She came down and went out of the front door. If Creswick came to the arbor it would be nothing if he found her reading a letter.



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A stamped envelope and through the mail, so that Mrs. Saunders might have seen it. She paused a second over this thought; then, if he had gone away, he had mailed it before he left, for it was post-marked "Hillside Springs." She turned it over.

Something was wrong, very wrong; something had happened. The whole summer had been strange and uneasy, and she had not been happy; but it had been worse ever since Mark's return from Newport. The greatest change had come on that very day. And this note she was sure meant some further change. "I am hurting you; I shall hurt you more; I may wound you almost to death," he had said, so of course this was something that would hurt her. There was a look about the outside of the note as if he had lost the wish to please her, as if anything would do for her. And she must not let anyone see that she was pained, must rouge to hide her whiteness! It might be better to determine not to be hurt. If he had deliberately planned to hurt her, she would defy him, and she tore open the envelope. A single sheet of ruled paper and a few carelessly written lines:

"DEAR MISS ORMONDE:

"Am sorry to leave without saying good-by, especially as I do not know when I shall see you again, being gone off on important business. Anything sent to my club, however, will reach me. Will write as soon as I know my plans.

"Your very sincere friend,

"M. WITTING."

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She turned it over, she read it again, then slowly she put it back into its envelope, and looked around her as if dazed. Gone indefinitely, gone without a word! "Anything sent to his club—" her eyes flashed, had she so belittled herself that he expected her to answer this? There were no tears, there was no blanching of her cheeks. If Mark could have seen her he would have realized the futility of his suggestion as to rouge. She was in a fury of humiliation and pain, she loathed herself, she had succumbed so easily, she had been as wax, moulded this way and that as he willed. She had fallen so easily into his hands that he did not value her, had thrown her away!

She rose hastily. She could not stay in that place where every inch of earth, every leaf and twig had become hateful to her. There it was he had charmed her, had hypnotized her, had befooled her! She could not stay there; and yet, and yet—a dry sob broke the stillness—he had loved her! He had been very strange lately, and yesterday he had seemed beside himself. The pathos of the unfinished—the last stitch that would never be taken. She sat down again weak and trembling. He had been so bitter of late, he had been so cruel. If he had not loved her he would have been calmly indifferent.

Perhaps he had gone away suddenly, had been obliged to write at the post-office, at the station, and on what paper he could get. Perhaps she had misunderstood, had misread. She took the note out once more, and again the blood rushed to her face. No, she had not misread. Careless and cool, almost con-

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temptuous, and "Dear Miss Ormonde"—it had been "Little Cherry-Love," or "Little One," or "Hidden-Violet-of-My-Soul"; every word of his other notes had struck her as having been carefully chosen for her alone, and none of them, he had said, were good enough to meet her eyes, nor strong enough to express his feeling. This was a studied insult. He would write again, and again her eyes blazed.

He had said that he was not noble, and he was not; there at least he had spoken true, and one other place; he had loved her, let no one deny that—he had loved her. In his eyes, in his voice, in his touch, he had loved her. Tired, no, he had not tired; something strange had happened, something strange when he was in town those days. He had fallen so low, he said, that he had lost his self-respect. Why he had not told her, she would have forgiven him. Again there came the dry little sob, she would have forgiven anything. Never would he have done for any woman what he had done to win her. What? He had said that on the very day he returned from Newport, the very day the strange change came, and he had meant it. He had been so glad that day, and now he had let her go! Oh, this hateful, hateful note! She struck the flimsy thing. "Anything sent to his club"—she got up hastily, she could not live in the same world with that note, and she went to the house.

Again, who was it would watch to see her pain? Her Cousin Henry?—he had been always so kind. Her world was a small one, and besides Mr. Saunders there were no others save Laurence Creswick and

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Mrs. Saunders. Creswick, of course not, his one wish was to make her happy; but she paused in her thoughts and almost in her walk before the name of Mrs. Saunders. She seldom saw her now, save in the presence of others, and if they met on the stairway or in the halls no word was said in passing. And yesterday, yesterday what an angry look had been in her eyes when Mark had taken the embroidery. Angry? She repeated the word, then raised her head and looked far away. Was it anger that she had seen there?

Her life had been so circumscribed, her experience had been so extremely limited, she had been so ordered, so suppressed, and of her own motion she had so forbidden herself to judge or to draw conclusions, had so drilled herself into an honorable subjection of all her faculties, that now from long habit she paused before so reversing her life as to pass judgment on Mrs. Saunders, the woman who had educated and supported her, who had trained her and clothed her, who all these years had relieved her father and mother of the burden of her support.

She walked on slowly into the house. She had not passed judgment; this man who had left her, this stranger who had forsaken her, should not tempt her to disloyalty. Mrs. Saunders had done nothing, and the look yesterday might well have meant that she was provoked at the folly of the whole transaction concerning the embroidery.

Her head was well up now, and the light in her eyes and the color in her cheeks did not look like despair or sorrow. In the hall she met Simmons. "There

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is no answer," she said, handing him Mark Witting's letter, "and will you burn this in the kitchen?"

The days went by, and Jane lived as in a dream. She went every morning to the bench in the arbor, taking a book and her work. If Creswick came he read aloud to her while she embroidered; if not, she read to herself. She could not have told what it was she read, but she went through the mechanical part of it, sometimes saying the words aloud. When Creswick read she was conscious that she deliberately took her mind up and put it down on the subject, compelling it to stay there. He was not worth a tear, a sigh, a pale cheek, Mark had declared, and she had decided that he was not worth a thought. He had said that he would write again; she would wait.

Meanwhile her training in self-control came to her rescue. She went about her usual avocations in the usual way, and Creswick, watching, came to the conclusion that the scene over the embroidery had been some of Mark Witting's nonsense. Mark had never seemed to be in love with the girl, his attentions had been all in the direction of Mrs. Saunders, so much so that it had been talked about a little. Nor had the girl seemed to care for Mark. Once or twice he had seen Mark look at her in a way that had provoked him, but never had he been puzzled until Mark had talked in such a melodramatic manner about unfinished things. Jane's hands had trembled, too, but she had gone on the porch so openly, and had explained so clearly and so simply the facts of the case that it could not have meant anything more than was on the

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surface. And surely Mrs. Saunders would not have allowed Mark Witting to pay any serious attentions to the girl. He could not support her, and had been talked about more than any man he had ever known who had been permitted to remain in respectable clubs. There could not be anything in it, and now that Mark had gone away indefinitely, so Miss Witting said, the whole thing would come to an end, and Creswick put it from him, and came a little oftener to the bench.

It was early in September that Simmons, bearing a tray with a letter on it, again sought Jane as she left the breakfast-room. He made no explanation this time, and she did not pause before taking it, for it was a most correct letter in size and shape and material. "Thank you," she said, then turned to the parlor, where a fire was burning.

She had seen Mr. Saunders go out, and now she knelt down on the hearth-rug. It was from Mark, she had seen that at a glance, but she had made no sign before Simmons that her heart seemed to be choking her, and even now, when absolutely alone, she steadied her hands before she broke the seal. It was dated the day before and written from his club, and began as the first note had begun—"My dear Miss Ormonde." She paused a moment, then rose to her feet—it was better to receive a blow standing.

"MY DEAR MISS ORMONDE:

"If you know me at all you know that I never beat about the bush, that even in my indirection I am direct. And if I know you at all, I am under the im-

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pression that you, also, prefer directness. This letter is to tell you, then, that with me everything has changed, both within and without. That my conduct is inexplicable goes without saying; I can only add that it is far better that it should remain unexplained. I am not worthy of you, and knowing this as well as I did I should never have approached you. I make no excuses, and hope that you will judge me as harshly as it is possible for your gentle nature to do. I shall not come near you again, but I have the temerity to ask that you will permit me to keep the few mementoes which I possess of our intercourse. I shall never forget it, or you. May God bless you more in the future than He has done in the past.

“Yours very truly,

“MARK WITTING.”

Very slowly Jane read it through the second time. She paused a moment, then touched a bell, and Simmons appearing, she handed him the letter.

“Will you burn this also?” she said; “it will smell disagreeably if burned in here,” and she went quietly up-stairs to her room.

She would not write a line to him, but she would at once send back the few things that he had given her. A book at Christmas, another he had brought her that summer; the one or two flowers he had put into her hands on special occasions she would burn—he must not know that she had kept them. With some notes, the two books were all that she would have to return. She laid the few things on her writing-table; so few, so intrinsically without value, that yet had

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seemed to represent such worlds of devotion, had seemed the foundation of all her future life.

Her treasures, that by some trick of memory brought back the treasures of her childhood, and their confiscation that had so rent her heart, that had so changed her nature. The smirched rag-doll, and the dollar, and the soap! She had sent Fanny away virtually—Fanny, who had been sorry—and she had later, at different times, destroyed the remaining contents of the work-box. The thread she had dropped into the fire, the scissors and thimble into the sea, and the box, broken up bit by bit, she had burned, watching for opportunity. They had been desecrated, and she hated them.

“May God bless you more in the future than He has done in the past,” Mark had written. Her blessings had been dubious, and a look came into her eyes as if her heart was sick—a look so forlorn, so forsaken, that one watching would have been relieved if she had washed it away with tears. Instead, she tied the notes into a packet, and carefully cutting from the books the fly-leaves where her name had been written, she wrapped each one in a bit of tissue-paper, then made a neat bundle of it all, tying it securely and addressing it to the club from which his note had been written; then went about putting on a walking-dress. She would go at once, before Mrs. Saunders emerged, and send off these things—they must go by return mail. If he sent back anything, Simmons would burn it. The embroidery with the needle in it—this was what he had meant, and she paused in her preparations; the pathos of the unfinished.



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She was standing before the looking-glass, and she deliberately scanned the expression of acute pain that had contracted her face. That was how suffering looked. Not pretty; and why suffer?—it was all imagination, fancy. What was it to suffer? Cutting one's finger had something tangible about it; but feelings, heart, memories—what were these formless, imponderable things that they should trouble her? What did it matter? Life would go on as before, and in this case there was no pathos of the unfinished, for now the unfinished was finished, dead, and soon to be buried; the books in the post-office—how unromantic—and the flowers? Suppose she buried the flowers in the arbor; they would return to earth, might nourish other flowers for slack-principled men to give to witless girls; the fire were better, they would go up in smoke and come down in rain; that would make flowers far more surely than if buried in that arbor that was too shady to permit growth. Their decay might nourish the shrubs of the arbor, but no one would give one of those stiff branches as a token. Since in the last analysis annihilation was impossible, she would put them where they would return in the least harmful form.

Slack-principled, that was Mark. How had she thought of such a combination of words as that? Slack-principled, ignoble. She would like to tell him this, to write him this. He was not noble—of course not—then why tell him? In order to mind it he would have to feel nobility. He would know what the word meant, but he would not mind, not being the thing

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itself. No, she would not write it, would not communicate with him. He might misunderstand her motives; an ignoble man would be capable of suspecting low motives.

A knock came at the door, and Simmons entered with a card. "Mr. Creswick, Miss Jane, and will you kindly take a walk with him?"

"Yes," then she paused a moment; she could mail the package. "Yes," she repeated; "I will be down in a moment." Motion, something to do, that was what she wanted. How fortunate that he had come.

It was an exquisite day, crisp and cool, and as they went slowly down the front steps, Creswick said: "I did not find you in the arbor; too cool, I thought, and so I proposed a walk. Where shall we go?"

"To the post-office first," Jane answered, "after that I do not care; any place will be beautiful on such a day as this. Indeed to live is enough. We might just sit down on the roadside and live."

"Someone might join us."

"Not if we select our seats with discretion—in the mud, for instance."

Creswick looked down on her. "What has troubled you?" he asked.

"Trouble?" the girl repeated, "that remark meant imbecility, Mr. Creswick, not trouble."

"Shall we go to the 'Blue Hills'?" Creswick went on.

"My word! but wasn't I romantic when I named those hills. Do you remember, Mr. Creswick?"

"Of course, the very first time that I ever went

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anywhere with you. A day just like this, though it was in the early summer——”

“Last summer; that seems ten thousand years away,” Jane interrupted.

“And you were in white,” Creswick went on, “with a white jacket——”

“And a black hat trimmed with field-flowers,” Jane again put in. “Don’t go into millinery, though perhaps I ought to encourage that kind of memory in a man. But I’d been reading a poem about people who longed to go to the hills that were blue——”

“And when the poor wretches reached the hills that were blue,” Creswick put in, “they did not know it because they also were green.”

Jane laughed. “Did I explain all that?” she asked.

“Of course; you used to explain everything to me then, you were just out from under your pastors and masters. You gave me much instruction as to small talk, also. Shall I put your package in for you?”

Jane shook her head. “It is a bad luck package,” she said; “I’ll put it in myself. What is your ideal of a gentleman?” she went on when they had resumed their walk.

“My grandmother is a very religious woman,” Creswick answered, “and she made me learn the fifteenth psalm as the creed of a gentleman.”

“I do not remember it.”

“The chief requirements are——”

“I do not want the chief requirements, I want the whole thing.”

“Are to speak the truth from the heart,” Creswick

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went on, "and to keep a promise, whether made in the letter or the spirit."

"I wanted to hear it all," the girl said, slowly, "because I want some light on the question of nobility. Do you think a man can be a gentleman and ignoble?"

"No."

"Are all the men I know noble?"

"I don't know."

"Then you are not sure that your friends are gentlemen?"

"From that stand-point, I am not sure about myself."

Jane looked up at him quickly, and for a little while they walked on in silence. They had left the village, and were now on the country road, making for the hills. The air was fresh and sweet with blowing over the snowy buckwheat fields; the berries of the mountain-ash were turning from gold to crimson; the hop-fields, the orchards, were all ripe for the gathering, and the old fences, overgrown with vines and briers, were turned to massed sunshine by the golden-rod.

"It is enough to live on such a day as this," Jane repeated.

Creswick looked about him, then down at his companion. "You seem so different to-day," he answered, irrelevantly, "so troubled; what is it? Who has hurt you, you who cannot protect yourself? Why not put your life into my hands, and have no more trouble?"

"Man is born to trouble," Jane answered. "No one can save another; we make our own shadows, you know." She paused, then added: "I am sorry, but I have answered that so many times."

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"Yes, but I have never accepted your answer."

They were walking very slowly, and Jane was using her closely rolled umbrella to hit aimlessly at the sticks and stones that came in her way.

"You are making a mistake," Creswick went on; "you should remember the saying, 'There is always one who loves, and one who is loved.' The wise woman marries the man who loves her."

"Is it never mutual?"

"Never absolutely balanced."

"And the woman who could stop to make that calculation would not be worth having."

"I have made it for you."

"I cannot marry a man I do not love."

"Until you love someone else I shall persist."

"Now you are the unwise one, for I am perfectly truthful when I say that I do not intend to marry at all," and she thumped on the ground with her umbrella as if for conviction.

"You all say that, and yet, what else will you do?"

Jane glanced up at him. "I've been thinking about that," she answered, frankly, "and I don't know how to struggle."

"Then why struggle? And when you get old?"

"There are plenty of old widows."

Creswick laughed. "At least it is not their fault that they are not cared for," he said.

"It is their fault that they have not learned to care for themselves," Jane retorted.

"Humanity has to take chances in everything."

"And that is just what I think I shall do," Jane

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agreed. "But it is true," she went on, more slowly, "people always say a man is making a fortune, and a woman is making a living. I shall probably only make a living—if that."

They had reached the top of the hill by this time, and took their seats at the roots of a solitary elm. "How lovely," Jane said.

"Yes," Creswick answered, "it is."

"But you are not interested."

"I've seen it before."

"You asked me once," Jane said, suddenly, "if I had no dreams. I've begun to dream; will you be interested in them?"

"Profoundly."

"I am thinking seriously of turning out to achieve something—to make a fortune."

"Is it necessary?"

There was a pause, in which Jane seemed to be absorbed in the scenery, then, with her eyes still far afield, she said: "Mrs. Saunders is my cousin only by marriage. Her husband and my father were brought up like brothers. Cousin Henry made some money and married a great deal; my father did neither, his wealth is in children, and to show his love for Cousin Henry, I, the eldest one, was named Jane for Cousin Henry's wife."

"A beautiful name."

"And Cousin Henry having no children," Jane went on, "showed his affection by educating and in a measure adopting me. You knew that I was adopted?"

"I supposed so."

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"And now the feeling is gradually taking possession of me," the girl went on, "that the time has come for me to do something; to arise in my might and declare myself." In her voice there was a note of bitterness that was absolutely new and that troubled her companion; in the next words, however, it had disappeared. "Nonsense aside," she said, "I must put something into my life. They have given me an education; have clothed me; have travelled me over the world, and I—I have accepted it."

"What were you expected to do?"

Jane was silent.

Creswick smiled. "I can guess," he said, "you are expected to marry well."

"And I do not want to marry at all," Jane put in, quickly, "and I think that I ought to tell cousin this. And then I am tired of this life, tired—tired! From morning to night we earn our amusements by the sweat of the brow, and when night comes we have not been amused. You men dress in one costume, and tear over the country after a tame fox or something less; you put on another costume, and hit balls across the grass, and still another in which to eat your dinners."

Creswick laughed. "Would it be more real if we did not change?" he queried.

"Nothing can make it real," Jane answered, slowly; "it is all a masquerade; you have nothing to do, and you do it violently, but it brings you no satisfaction."

"I have not said so."

"You look it continually. And for me, I do no

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more good now than when as a child on our wilderness of a plantation I made gardens of cut flowers and laid out dust cities. And of course I must have been made for something. Think of all the generations behind me, of all the combined people that I am! You are all this, too, and there must be something for us to do, we must be good for something. I must tell cousin. I feel as if I were living under false pretences—deceiving her.”

“And she will laugh and will not let you go.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” Jane answered, slowly; “she may agree to the truth that I have not come up to the mark that she has set for me; if so, I’ll go out at once and make my fortune.”

“How?”

“I do not know yet.” She paused, then went on more slowly: “Something is very wrong somewhere. I seem to be realizing suddenly that my life is all a mistake, that I am growing dull through pretending that nothing is something, that this daily round of absolute uselessness is of importance. I’d like to be contented; I’d like to revert into the old-fashioned girl that my mother must have been; go back to the generation that really believed that ‘Men must work and women must weep.’ I’d give a great deal to be like that. From her letters I think that my mother is like that,” and she began to dig in the ground with her umbrella.

“And she married,” Creswick said.

“The man she loved,” Jane answered, slowly, “and risked far more than this worldly wise generation would



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think of risking. She knew that her husband was a gentleman and a Christian, and neither she nor her parents seem to have made any other requirements. They were quite sure that they would be happy, and they have been, though cousin, who told me all this for a warning, does not understand it at all. Father plants and reaps, and the bad years run him into debt and the good years pull him out, and they love each other, and love their children, and of course there are lots of us. Everything that goes wrong is for their good, and everything that goes right is a direct and personal blessing from the Almighty."

"I envy them."

"So do I."

Creswick sighed and leaned back so as to rest on his elbow. In this position his view of Jane was limited to the curve of her cheek and temple and the back of one closely set little ear; for the rest, he could see the back of her neck as it rose above a linen collar, and her hair that waved naturally and trimly up, to be lost in a coil. It was not much, but at least he could look at it persistently, and look all that he felt.

"It is a strange thing," Jane went on, still prodding diligently in the ground with her umbrella, prodding with some force, for each prod jarred her a little and changed the lights and shadows on her hair. "A very strange thing that women seldom make a permanent success, and yet they are as clever on an average as men, do not you think so, Mr. Creswick?"

"Of course."

"I think it is that we strike too high; we all go in

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for art, or literature, or music, or the professions—at least in our class of life. Of course there are women in trade, but you seldom hear of a lady going regularly into business.”

“Groceries,” Creswick suggested.

“Well, groceries; why not? What I mean is, going seriously into business with a view of building it up and making a fortune, not pottering along and posing as a ‘plucky little woman.’ And, by the way, why is it that a man always combines plucky and little when he wishes to describe a woman who has done something? Never mind if she is ten feet high, they will say ‘a plucky little woman.’ Why?”

“Perhaps they mean the plucky to apply to the woman, and the little to what she has done.”

Jane looked round on him slowly.

“That is not a chance shot,” he went on, “that is the result of long thought and observation. I knew a woman once who was very large and very fond of a bargain, and I used to hear her say: ‘I had such a nice little gown made the other day by a new little woman I discovered.’ It puzzled me at first, because it would have been impossible for that big creature to have a little gown, then I came to the conclusion that ‘little’ meant cheap. Applying this to your plucky little woman, who is yet ten feet high, I draw the conclusion that little applies to what she has done. But may I ask what has caused this sudden burst of discontent?”

“I wanted to tell a man that he was not noble,” Jane answered, frankly, “and I did not do it because I

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thought that if he were not noble he would not understand it or mind it."

Creswick paused a moment. The girl was puzzling him greatly. She seemed to have changed radically, and all in twenty-four hours, and was talking with a freedom, an abandon that he had never before experienced in her. She seemed to be letting herself go, to be revealing all at once all of her stored-up observations of people and life, and with a touch of pathetic cynicism that he had never suspected. It troubled him greatly, and the last speech startled him unpleasantly. He sat up so that he could see Jane's face. "Ought you not to tell Mr. Saunders?" he asked, gravely.

"No," and the negative was sharp, and she drew away from him as if he were the embodiment of his unpalatable advice. "No, it is not worth that; but out of it, and out of your fifteenth psalm has come the question, Am *I* noble? And I do not think that I am as long as I stay where I am as I am. Come, let us go home," and she rose.

"And you will keep in mind what I have said?" Creswick asked.

"Do not waste your life on me, Mr. Creswick."

"Waiting free until you may need me will not be waste."

Jane looked up quickly, while the wind blew the little curls across her brow, and a new light came into her eyes. "*You* are noble," she said; "such a love helps one's self-respect—thank you."

## XII

“ The skies seemed true above thee ;  
The rose true on the tree ;  
The bird seemed true the summer through ;  
But all proved false to me ;  
World, is there no good thing in you—  
Life, love, or death—or what ?  
Since lips that sang I love thee  
Have said, I love thee not ? ”

MRS. SAUNDERS herself had, that morning, received a letter from Mark Witting saying good-by. It was brief, and it was also a relief to her. She had not as yet allowed herself to think of Mark Witting, save to be glad that he was out of her sight ; but some day he would come back to pay his debt, and before that day Jane must be married to Laurence Creswick. There was only the life of one frail old woman between her and that event ; for if Mark should inherit to-morrow, to-morrow he would return. She almost trembled at the possibility, for that return would mean that he would bear Jane away in triumph.

She had covered her face a moment, then had shaken off the thought. The only way to act sanely was to act coolly ; and if she wished to remain cool, she must not analyze too closely her feelings as to this complication of circumstances.

Her best plan was at once to resume relations with

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Jane; she had been silly to drop them; and work to the one end of the marriage with Laurence Creswick. Nor must there be explanations with the girl as to the resumption of the old habits; she must simply take things up where she had put them down, and if Jane had wandered so far from her training as to ask questions, she would say that she had been displeased with her behavior toward Mark Witting.

Colby reported that the girl had gone to walk with Creswick, and though that act in itself pleased her, yet that the girl had sent her no message, no intimation of her going, showed as decided a change in the girl's attitude toward her as was possible. A month ago Jane would not have dreamed of taking such a liberty; but it was her own fault; she had been absolutely silly and—the rest did not matter, only the result, which was that Mark having gone, she had recovered her balance and must work while she yet had time. She would watch for Jane's coming, and in giving orders as to her costumes for the day's engagements, would return to her old attitude of arranger and orderer of her life. But it would be hard to be patient, to have even a semblance of kindness in her manner.

Thus it was that she was waiting at the top of the staircase when Jane, returning from her walk, began to mount them. "Mrs. Cumming's tea is this afternoon, Jane," she said.

The girl started and looked up. "Yes," she answered, "yes, I had forgotten." She stopped, confused with two wonders; had her expression betrayed anything in the upward look before her face had been

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prepared to meet the face of another? and what did Mrs. Saunders's sudden change of treatment mean? and what was she, Jane, expected to do under the circumstances? Of course accept whatever Mrs. Saunders chose to offer, do whatever Mrs. Saunders indicated; where Mrs. Saunders was concerned, she had no rights—she seemed to have no rights anywhere. These thoughts rushed through her mind while Mrs. Saunders was saying—"Your heliotrope gown will be best for you to wear; it is too cool for either blue or white."

Jane had reached the top of the stairs by this time, and her doubts as to her course were set at rest by a gesture of Mrs. Saunders, motioning her to follow into the morning-room.

"The heliotrope is exceedingly becoming to you," Mrs. Saunders went on, "and I wish you to wear it; and at the concert this evening you will wear the pink and silver. You have been looking worn of late, and need bright colors."

The blood rose slowly in Jane's face. Mrs. Saunders had returned almost too completely to her old treatment; but what did it matter, as she, Jane, seemed not to be able to direct successfully her own life? it was well that there was someone to direct it for her, and she answered, with a faint smile, "I must be getting old."

"That you are losing your looks does not amuse me," Mrs. Saunders answered, coldly.

Jane easily put away the smile, and began to follow the pattern on the rug with her umbrella.

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"And this morning," Mrs. Saunders continued, "you went out without telling me, and without asking if there was anything that you could do for me."

"I did not think of it," Jane answered, wondering if Mrs. Saunders had forgotten how she had been ostracised of late. "I suppose I thought of you as at the baths."

"Impossible! This summer I have been only twice a week."

True, Jane remembered too late, and a fleeting thought went through her mind that this might have been the cause of some of the strange happenings of the summer; but how? "It was just a piece of thoughtlessness, then," she said; "and you were not up."

"And you could not have waited?"

"Of course, if I had thought."

"And since you were in such a hurry to go out with Mr. Creswick, what was it you had to do?"

"Nothing. We walked to where there was a view, and rested a little while, then we came back. Like the 'King of France and all his men, we went up the hill and down again.' And the scenery was beautiful, and the weather delightful."

It was now Mrs. Saunders's turn to think. There was a new tone in Jane's voice, a spurious flippancy in her answer that was absolutely unusual, that amounted almost to carelessness of her and her presence, and swiftly to her mind came back Mark's warning—'She will not stay in your hand forever.' It was high time that their old habits should be resumed,

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but more gradually than she had begun; and alarmed, she asked, in a kinder voice: "And what did you talk about?"

"Many things," Jane quoted again, then stopped, adding, slowly: "I said that you had educated and clothed me from the best sources for years; that I did not think that I deserved it, and ought to go away." And the girl flashed a quick look into the handsome face opposite her.

"And what did Mr. Creswick say?"

"That he was sure that you would not let me go."

"He supposes that you are necessary to me," Mrs. Saunders suggested.

"No, I did not let him think that," Jane answered, quietly. She had returned to following the pattern on the rug, and looking down did not see the glance that Mrs. Saunders threw in her direction as she asked: "What did you let him think?"

"That I had not at all reached the standard that you had set for me, and that probably you would not object to my departure."

"Very true; but has it not occurred to you that you *ought* to reach the standard which I have set for you?"

"Yes."

"And you will not try?"

"I have not said that."

Mrs. Saunders's eyes flashed. Mark Witting had understood this girl better than she did; this was verging on rebellion. She must be careful. "And you did not even think of taking the dogs for a run?" was her irrelevant next question.



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"If you wish me to take them, cousin, there is still time before lunch."

"Have I ever allowed you to exercise the dogs as a maid or a footman would? Will it trouble you too much to ring that bell?"

Without answering, the girl leaned back and touched the button in the wall behind her, which signal was immediately answered by Colby. "I wish you to tell Simmons, Colby, that Joseph must take the dogs for an hour's run," Mrs. Saunders ordered. "Simmons will have to arrange the work, but it is imperative that the dogs should be exercised. They have not been looking well lately. And doubtless Mr. Creswick would have enjoyed the dogs," she went on when Colby had disappeared. "Men are always fond of dogs."

Still following the pattern of the rug, Jane seemed lost in thought, and made no answer. The change in Mrs. Saunders's treatment was puzzling her, and why should she not ask the wherefore of it. Not only had Mrs. Saunders gone back to their old relations, but she had gone back to the treatment which she had dealt out to the girl in her school-days; why should not she ask about it? She looked up, but Mrs. Saunders had turned to her desk, and the training of Jane's whole life laid a hand on her lips.

"Now for my notes," Mrs. Saunders said. "Meanwhile, Jane, you had better see if your heliotrope dress needs anything done to it; at least give it to Colby to look over. If there is one thing more than another that I have tried to impress on you, it is that freshness is the backbone of a costume. Have you ever seen me with a soiled ribbon or a bit of tumbled lace?"

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"No," Jane answered, rising.

"Ah!" And Mrs. Saunders looked up at her husband, who had appeared in the doorway.

"Am I wanted?" And Mr. Saunders looked from his wife to Jane and back again.

"No," Mrs. Saunders answered; "but, by the way, Henry, don't call on Joseph for anything. I have had to send him out with the dogs. I really think the dogs are your business, you know, and Jane might have helped me with them this morning, especially Geist, her own dog, but she did not remember me in her arrangements."

There was a pause, then Jane, saying, "I'll go and see Colby, cousin," left the room.

When the last sound of the girl's step had died away, Mrs. Saunders said to her husband: "What do you think of Jane and Laurence Creswick?"

"What is there to think?"

"First, that I am tired of this place; it is stupid; and I have come here for two summers."

"By your own wish."

"And that, though Laurence Creswick's attentions to Jane have been so quiet as not to attract public comment, they have increased steadily until I think that by this time they must mean something."

"I don't understand."

"That Laurence Creswick would be an uncommonly good match for Jane."

"And you really think that Creswick is good enough for her?"

"Good enough! You astonish me. He comes of the best people and is rich; what more do you want?"

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Mr. Saunders pulled his mustache slowly, and seemed to be following the pattern of the rug with his eyes as Jane had followed it with her umbrella. "I wish to keep Janey," he said; then he added, bluntly: "And I'll be hanged if I think any man good enough for her."

"You thought yourself good enough for me," his wife returned, crisply. "But," she went on, "you are beyond me. Here for no pleasure of my own, simply because she was your cousin, I have taken this girl and trained, and educated, and clothed her from the best sources, as she herself told Larry Creswick, and what do you think is to come of it?"

"You have gained an affectionate companion."

"I'm not sure that I wanted one; at least not for life; and an old maid means failure. But that is neither here nor there. Laurence Creswick is an admirable match, and I am sure that his attentions mean something."

"I suppose he is in love with her."

"Then it is time that he declared himself."

"He may have done so."

"And Jane not told me!"

"Of course not if she has refused him."

"Refused him—refused Laurence Creswick!" And Mrs. Saunders fixed her eyes on the desk in front of her. Mr. Saunders glanced at her, then rising, went toward the door. When he reached the hall Mrs. Saunders raised her head, and he paused.

"I should advise you to leave this alone," he said.

"If she has refused Larry Creswick—if——" Mrs.

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Saunders stopped and turned again to her desk. Stone-still she sat until Mr. Saunders was out of hearing, then she shut the door quietly, locking it. Refused Laurence Creswick! and she struck her hands together. Impossible! And yet, and yet. Had Mark known this, had he made the girl keep quiet about this also? Had he, for his own purposes, managed this whole thing so as to deceive her until "after the marriage settlements had been made"? Impossible! Creswick would never have continued his attentions if Jane had refused him; he had been uncertain about Mark and so had waited; now that Mark was gone, he would address the girl, would come to her for her influence on the girl; he was so very conventional, that he would never speak to Jane until he had asked permission of Mr. Saunders or herself. She had frightened herself unnecessarily, and this afternoon she would put some questions to Creswick; she must find out. Also, she would advise him to wait a little before he approached Jane. As far as she knew, Mark had not as yet written to break his engagement with the girl, had not written to her at all. Perhaps was going to let silence and neglect do it for him. No, she would sound Creswick, win his confidence, then advise him to wait. In a little while Jane's pride would be aroused, and on the rebound she would surely accept Creswick. Decidedly the best plan was for Creswick to wait.

It was a long drive to Mrs. Cumming's, but Mrs. Saunders did not avail herself of the opportunity to approach the subject of Laurence Creswick, and when, on their arrival, he made haste to join them, she held

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out her hand to him with a smile that not only showed all her milk-white teeth, but flashed as well from her handsome eyes.

"A man at an afternoon tea," she said, "is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. I am so glad to see you."

"You are very kind; and may the rock roll around with you and Miss Ormonde?"

"Of course; as Miss Witting says, it is a great thing for old people to be favored with the company of bright young people. Jane, dear, verify my words that you are young and bright. But here is Mrs. Cumming. Oh, my dear Mrs. Cumming, how good you are to exert yourself at this season of the year to have afternoon teas! And your place is such a joy; such a superb view! The air is so much better than the air at our cottage; but Mr. Saunders and my cousin here have become so attached to it that I am afraid that I am doomed to it for all the summers of my life. You see when a family numbers three, two is a majority. But we stop the way; will you take us for a stroll, Mr. Creswick? Jane, my dear, rouse yourself; indeed, Mr. Creswick, you do not know what I go through," laughing heartily. "Jane and Mr. Saunders are so averse to exertion of any kind that I have not only to arrange every detail, manage every department, but, in addition, do all the talking."

"Who could object to your doing all the talking, Mrs. Saunders?"

"Flatterer!" she cried, shaking her finger at him, "and encouraging my obstinate cousin here, in her

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moody silence. Mr. Saunders smokes and looks as wise as an owl; Jane looks out of the nearest window or examines the pattern of the rugs; she does not look as wise as her cousin, but she is just as silent. See now how she is looking out across the hills. Poor child; run away to the house, dear, if you are not happy."

Jane turned, and Creswick paused in his walk.

"Do not go back with her," Mrs. Saunders interposed. "I know her much better than you do, and she would rather go alone."

"Thank you," Jane said quietly to Creswick, and walked away without a look behind. Creswick was troubled, and Mrs. Saunders turned to watch the girl as she went.

"I have had her ever since she was a little child," she said, as if to herself, "and yet I cannot make her out; she is moody; she is secretive."

"She is most frank and ingenuous," Creswick interrupted, quickly.

Mrs. Saunders smiled indulgently. "You have lived more than a quarter of a century," she said, "and do you not yet know that women are one thing to men, and another to their own sex?"

"Men are so also."

Mrs. Saunders looked away for a moment before she brought her handsome eyes, with a liquid light in them, to bear on Creswick. "In your heart you are misjudging me," she said; "I see that; but under the circumstances I forgive you. I have been watching you for some time, and you love my cousin."

"Of course," Creswick answered, simply.

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"And have made the mistake of not taking the old matron into your confidence."

"There has been nothing to confide. I love her and she does not love me; that is all."

Mrs. Saunders had to control a start, then, in the same even tone, she asked: "And how have you found out so much so certainly?"

"I have asked her not once, but many times."

"Without my permission, without my influence?"

"I did not wish her to be influenced."

"And may I ask what reason she gives for her obduracy?"

"She does not love me." There was a moment's pause, then Creswick added, with slow decision, as if refuting, once for all, some unheard accusation: "I believe in Miss Ormonde as I never expected to believe in any woman. I would stake my life on her."

"And yet," Mrs. Saunders said, slowly, "she has never given me her confidence—as to you, for instance."

"She regards this as my secret."

"And ever since her childhood I have cared for her and loved her, have watched, and arranged, and thought for her. But now," turning on him, "will you tell me what you hope to gain by following Jane so patiently?"

"I hope to gain Miss Ormonde. A woman won against her will is always worth more than the other kind."

The color deepened in Mrs. Saunders's face. "And your plan?"

"To make myself agreeable to her, never to worry

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or annoy her, and in time to become necessary to her. In short, to become a habit—the Creswick habit.” And he laughed a little. “Am I not humble enough?”

“Too humble. I know no woman worth that labor.”

“Allow me to differ.”

“As you like; but it is sad to be so misunderstood. You have been in and out of my house constantly for two years, Mr. Creswick, but you have never known me, save, perhaps, from another’s representations; consequently you judge me harshly——”

“My dear Mrs. Saunders——”

She lifted a silencing finger. “I know what you would say,” she went on, “and thank you; and doubtless Jane has said kind things of me; she has had no occasion to say anything else; but when an outsider sees two people together, the one in authority always cheerful, and the one under authority always dumb and obedient with the punctilious obedience of duty, one is apt to judge the one in authority harshly as a domestic tyrant—as the ‘Iron hand in the velvet glove,’ and the rest of it. I forgive you, Mr. Creswick, for it is quite natural; but you had done better to have told me your intentions.”

“You are very kind; but, as you say, until now I have not known you.”

Mrs. Saunders smiled. “We will not be sarcastic,” she said, “and perhaps some day you will be a kinder judge. I forgive you; women forgive men almost everything, you know. And now will you take me to the house?”

The drive home was an eventful one, for scarcely



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had Creswick turned away from saying farewell at the carriage, when Mrs. Saunders, as it were, pinioned Jane with both eyes and tongue. She had found that Laurence Creswick loved the girl—was determined to win the girl, and under ordinary circumstances she would have let things alone; but the impatience of years, the jealousy of recent events had turned to fury within her, fury that Jane had once more outwitted her. So quiet, so calm, so unanswering, this girl since her childhood had never winced, had never pleaded, and now in silence had gone her own way, quietly holding both these men in leash, as it were, while she, herself, had been used as a screen! Like a searing flame this last realization had come to her, but she had controlled the horrid knowledge, had refused to contemplate it; now, blindly in her anger, she was trying to analyze what it was that stirred her so deeply. Mark's love for the girl? It was not only this that was driving her as with a whip of scorpions; she seemed, besides, to be possessed of an unquenchable desire to make this insensate creature beside her show some feeling, to make her acknowledge her supremacy; and yet, she must be careful; this marriage with Creswick was her punishment for Mark, her triumph in her own world; it must be accomplished; she must control herself.

"I had a charming talk with Mr. Creswick," she began, striving to keep her voice from trembling.

"Yes."

"And I think that we have obtained a better knowledge of each other."

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"Yes."

"He acknowledges," Mrs. Saunders went on, "that he has never known me except, of course, from the reports of others."

Jane leaned back with a waiting look on her face.

"He seems to have regarded me as something of a tyrant." Mrs. Saunders's voice was perfectly steady now, and perfectly cold. "The 'Iron hand in the velvet glove,' and the rest of it. An unpleasant thought to be brought home to one, but like all men in love," and the storm lightning began to escape from Mrs. Saunders's eyes, "he takes all that you say for gospel truth."

"I do not remember ever discussing you with Mr. Creswick."

"Of course not; I have brought you up too well for that; but by not giving me your confidence you have seemed afraid of me—have made me seem a tyrant. The confidence I allude to is that you have refused him not once, but a number of times."

"Yes."

"Mere assent will not do in this case. I do not need confirmation of Mr. Creswick's words; what I wish is explanation."

"I do not love him."

"And do you really think that I will take that as an explanation?" And the expression of Mrs. Saunders's mouth was not agreeable. "You are quite old enough to know why for two summers I have come to this stupid place, why I have cultivated Laurence Creswick's deaf grandmother."

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"You spoke of her always as your old friend."

"My dear Jane, have you not learned yet that it is folly for you to try to fence with me? Because for two years you have succeeded in deceiving me does not prove that you have universal wit. Mrs. Creswick is my old friend; but one does not follow up an old friend—a deaf old friend—through all eternity. As I say, you have deliberately deceived me—have been knowingly trifling with the man I intended you to marry; and what I demand is an adequate explanation."

"To refuse a man is not to trifle with him."

"You persist in answering me? then listen, and learn that two can play at the game of secretiveness." And she leaned forward so as to look directly into the girl's face. "I did not ask for your confidence—your confidence as to Mark Witting, but neither did I give you my confidence; now I will tell you. Now," smiling a little, "I will tell you that he thought you an heiress—*my* heiress."

Jane's dry lips stirred, but they made no sound.

"And I disabused his mind."

Jane bowed.

"Now," and Mrs. Saunders's smile vanished, "now I demand to know if you held Laurence Creswick off because of Mark Witting?"

Jane wiped her dry lips, but no word came.

"You are struck dumb to find that two can play at keeping counsel? or is it shame?—and does not your pride suggest that you accept this other man?"

Jane's lips were deathly white and her eyes were blazing.

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"Is it worth while to split your gloves and to bend the handle of your parasol so perilously—an expensive parasol?"

Jane's hands fell apart in her lap, and a dark ring seemed to be settling around her lips. Mrs. Saunders grasped the girl's wrist. Her touch had instantaneous effect; Jane drew away quickly, the color rushed to her face, and Mrs. Saunders leaned back with a sigh of relief. The girl had looked like sudden death.

"Well?" she queried.

"I have a home to go to," Jane said slowly, as if she found speech difficult, "and I shall go."

"To a father who has eight younger children to clothe and educate? And then where do I, and all that you owe me, come into your calculations?"

"You have wiped that out."

"Indeed?"

"I have tried to be grateful," the girl went on with the same seeming difficulty of speech, "but now you must let me go. What you have just done—has cancelled everything, and I assure you that—that I will never do as you wish—never! I want to go home," she said, as she had said long ago in her childish misery—"I want to go home. I have been homesick all my life, and—and——"

"Well?"

"And I have never, never forgiven you since you took away my soap and my money—never! And I have never loved you—never!"

"Really?"

"Never. And you threw away the key to my work-box."

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"And the rag-doll?"

"Yes."

"And Mark Witting?"

The girl turned her head away.

"Well?" Mrs. Saunders said for the third time, her voice still holding the cold, low tone it had gained. "And do you—do you really think that I will allow this? That I will allow you to go home and proclaim me a tyrant? That I will allow my world to see that having had a girl from her childhood, I have not been able to inspire her with even common affection for one who has been more than a mother? That I will allow people to say that under my care Mark Witting has been able to jilt you, and Laurence Creswick to pass you by?"

There was a hunted look in Jane's eyes.

"Do you not see," Mrs. Saunders went on, "that the only thing left for you to do, the only thing that will show Mark Witting that he has not hurt you, that will restore my confidence and your own self-respect, is for you to accept Laurence Creswick? Do you not know that the world will be very quick to say that both these men trifled with you? And if you refuse Laurence Creswick what will you do? No one else who has been attentive has been seriously attentive, and matrimony is the only way out of this snarl; I can see no other."

"Let me go home."

"Run away ignominiously? Have you no pride? We have had a plain confession this afternoon, and you have insulted me liberally; has not that more

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than made up for what I did in telling Mark Witting of your dependence? Ought you not rather to thank me for unveiling him to you, and for showing you of what stuff your dream was made? Money was what he was after, and I knew it. Laurence Creswick is after you. Poor fool, he thinks you are all wings, so angelic do you seem to him, and is willing to serve any length of time if at the last he may win you. I ventured that no woman was worth such long toil, and he differed with me promptly. What more do you want than the unswerving, unquestioning devotion of a man who is not only rich, but well-born, well-looking, and upright—stupidly upright? Nor need you be in any haste; he is willing to wait as patiently as a muzzled beast! You ought to be proud of such a love; especially as one cannot be even reasonably sure that you deserve it. A girl who could be carried away with the charms of Mark Witting does not cause one to feel any enormous amount of confidence in either her judgment or her taste. And do you reflect that your father is getting old, that the burden of his family is almost more than he can now carry, without the weight of you added?" She ceased, and the silent girl, with her head turned away, was gazing out across the rolling hills, where exquisite vistas of fields, of peaceful orchards, passed unheeded, for her eyes looked like blind eyes, her lips were dumb. And the silence lasted until, arriving at home, they reached the upper hall, where their ways separated; then Mrs. Saunders turned and said:

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“Your dinner will be sent up to you, but I shall expect you to go to the concert this evening, wearing your pink and silver, and I demand that this afternoon remain entirely between us.”

And Jane went away swiftly to her room.

### XIII

“Live—yet live—  
Shall sharpest pathos blight us, knowing all  
Life needs for life is possible to will—”

TEN minutes before dinner Jane appeared in the drawing-room, where Mr. and Mrs. Saunders were sitting. Mrs. Saunders looked up quickly. “You are feeling better?” she said, with admirable ease.

“Quite well,” Jane answered.

“Sick, Janey?” And in his turn Mr. Saunders looked up from his paper.

“Not at all,” the girl answered. “Cousin only fancied that I looked worn.” And passing by Mrs. Saunders with a carelessness she had never shown before, she paused in front of the small wood fire called for by the cool evening, and put her foot on the low fender, drawing up her filmy draperies out of danger.

Mrs. Saunders drew a long breath softly between her teeth, and once more heard Mark Witting’s warning—“She will not stay in your hand for ever.” For the first time in her life the girl had disobeyed her absolutely. She had come down to dinner when told not to, and had not put on the pink and silver gown; she must be careful, and she said slowly, “Why not in pink and silver?”



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"I thought that I had color enough to wear white," was answered quietly.

"Color enough?" Mr. Saunders put in. "Your cheeks are like peaches."

"Not too much, I hope?" And Jane turned to smile down on him.

"Not a bit—not a bit; you'll surely be the belle of the ball."

"Concert," Mrs. Saunders corrected, crisply.

"Only a phrase, my dear." And Mr. Saunders went back to his paper and Mrs. Saunders to her book. Was the girl rouged? her thoughts ran; and what spirit she had! Mrs. Saunders's eyes burned down on the inoffensive print like dull, red flames, but she read no word. The girl's color was brilliant and she had no rouge—could not have gotten into her dressing-room since the drive. She took a good look at her as they went into the dining-room, and again under the electric lights of the ball-room, where the concert was to take place. She had never thought Jane anything more than pretty until this evening; now she was positively handsome. Spirit, pride; how astonishing! and this last must be her lever; she must use it, work on it, encourage it, and finally launch the girl as Mrs. Laurence Creswick. What a moment that would be! What joy to send those wedding-cards to Mark Witting! What a debt she owed him! Her own eyes and color were brilliant that night, and it was remarked that Mrs. Saunders grew handsomer with every year.

"Yes, and harder," Miss Witting added. "I wonder that girl has kept her mind."

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"To-night she looks like some dumb creature at bay," Mrs. Kennet answered, "but handsomer than ever before. I wonder what is on foot."

Miss Witting grunted. "It might be anything with Jane Saunders to the fore," she said, while in her own mind she wondered if Mark had over-reached himself. It was true that she had sent him away on business, but he had been in a vile temper for some time before that. Did the girl care for him, and had Jane Saunders prevented the match? That would make her almost ready to endow the girl, and she grunted again, or Mark.

Jane, meanwhile, was behaving most carefully; the more so because she was as one on a rack. The words she had said that afternoon in her pain, the pathetic cry of her childhood—"I want to go home"—seemed to ring in her ears; seemed to be repeating themselves over and over again in her heart; seemed to throb through all the music. Her whole life seemed to roll back on her; all the years of it to that winter's evening when she had been taken away out of the old nursery, that for her was always filled with a red, warm glow; where Jim, dead so long ago, was always playing; where Tom was always a baby, and Marion still slept like the fairy princess. From there she had entered a narrow strait of life with never an unwatched moment. Homesick, troubled, bewildered by letters read to her that seemed to confirm Mrs. Saunders's words that her father and mother were poor and struggling, letters that told the little child to be happy, to be appreciative of the kindness of her cousins, and of her advantages,

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she had gone from bewilderment to despair, from despair to hopeless, unquestioning obedience. There had been no other course open to her. And the flesh of Mrs. Saunders's white hands was as hard as bone. She knew now that she had always been afraid, and she moved a little away from Mrs. Saunders's side. A touch came on her gloved arm, but she did not move back again.

"Mr. Creswick is going to sing," Mrs. Saunders whispered, smiling and pointing down to the programme; and the people about them—all people of their own world—saw the little smile and gesture.

Jane raised her flowers to her face. Laurence Creswick had sent them. She put them away from her, and fixed her eyes coldly on the singer. A charity concert for the benefit of a "Refuge"; and what would he sing? How ridiculous—how ridiculous!

"Love for a year, a month, a day—  
But alas, for the love that loves away!"

What an absurd song for the occasion; how grim life was; what a gruesome farce she was finding it. Why had she not a refuge? Why could she not go to her home? What explanation could she give? Her cousin had thrown away her rag-doll, her cousin had hard hands, her cousin had thrown away another rag-doll?

"What a delightful voice he has." Mrs. Kennet, who was seated in front of them, had turned round and was speaking to Mrs. Saunders and looking at Jane.

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"Delightful!" Mrs. Saunders answered. "I hope he will give us another song."

Jane felt a pressure on her foot, and looked up. "But what a ridiculous song to sing at a concert for a refuge," she said, looking straight at Mrs. Kennet.

"What an extraordinary idea." And Mrs. Saunders laughed a little uneasily. "Ah! he is going to sing again."

Mrs. Kennet turned away slowly, and Mrs. Saunders, raising her fan, spoke behind it to Jane. "You had better be silent," she said, "than make such speeches as that."

Jane turned away.

"This is his last song," Mrs. Saunders went on, still behind her fan, "and if he joins us, you must behave properly."

Jane made no sign, but when Creswick approached, she drew her draperies aside to make room for him.

"How generous you are, Mr. Creswick"—and Mrs. Saunders leaned across Jane—"to give us two songs. There is to be dancing later, is there not?"

"Yes; I came to ask Miss Ormonde if I might bring her a dancing card."

"Do you feel well enough to stay, dear?" Mrs. Saunders asked.

"Yes." And again Jane raised her flowers to her face.

"Then I will secure the card at once." And Creswick went away.

At this moment four young women were playing on two pianos, and Mrs. Saunders took advantage of

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the noise. "Please remember," she said, "that nothing you can do can possibly hurt me or Mark Witting, but only yourself; and remember, also, that unless you are so peculiar as to wish your little story known, you had better be very careful. Laurence Creswick is your surest refuge from the world's tongues; make the best of him."

And Jane danced and danced; why not? She had loved Mark Witting; yes, she had given him her best of faith, and of trust, and of love; there was no shame in that; and she had believed in his love. She had believed in him up to that very afternoon. Was it that afternoon? was it not years ago? She had called him ignoble, but she had not truly meant it, for she had had a feeling that he still cared for her; but now she understood. He had never, never loved her! Mrs. Saunders had opened her eyes, had destroyed all her faith, all her illusions, had drained all the sweetness out of the little love-story—the little farce! She shivered as she danced.

"Are you cold?" Creswick asked, making a motion as if to stop.

"No; do not stop." Then laughing a little: "It was only 'a rabbit ran over my grave,'" she said.

"What a dismal idea."

"Which, the rabbit or the grave?" And she held her head back to look up at him.

"The combination, that your grave should be free to the rabbits. It makes one think of wild places, of barren places."

"What matter? We are dancing now. Let us dance,

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dance, dance! This music is good enough to make a grave-stone skip, to make the rabbits stop and caper over my future resting-place instead of scurrying across it. I feel as if I should like to dance until I dropped."

And Mark had asked her to keep it all quiet from Mrs. Saunders, her thoughts ran on, keep it all from the world for a little while, their own secret, the sweeter the more secret. He had persuaded her to that. And he had been so careful, for her sake, he had declared. Attentive, but so quiet, so little to say to her in public, all for her sake! And he had told it all to Mrs. Saunders—laid it all bare to Mrs. Saunders. He had never loved her, never loved her.

On and on they flew, Creswick's own pulses catching the excitement; what ailed the girl? At last he said: "I think that Mrs. Saunders wants you."

"Don't think it," Jane answered, "but take me into the refreshment-room."

Creswick obeyed, and found her a chair. "What shall I bring you?" he asked, and Jane looked away from his eyes.

Then from behind her came Mrs. Saunders's low voice asking, "Don't you think it is time to go?"

Jane did not answer, did not turn.

"I think my cousin is dancing too much," Mrs. Saunders went on to Creswick. "She has not been looking well of late, but she will not come home."

A puzzled look came on Creswick's face. "Perhaps some supper will be good for her just now," he said.

"I am perfectly well," Jane put in quietly, leaning back in her chair, "and if you will bring me an ice, Mr.

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Creswick, that will be enough." Since she had thrown down the gauntlet to Mrs. Saunders in the matter of the pink and silver gown, she felt absolutely defiant; she longed to dispute every point with her, to thwart her at every turn. It could not be possible that only that morning she had sat so humbly in the study to be lectured; that only that afternoon she had turned so obediently and gone to the house, leaving Mrs. Saunders to talk to Creswick and to find out from him all that she wanted to know. But she was not sorry for that bit of meekness; she was rather glad that it had all happened; it was better to know the whole truth, however bitter.

"We will stay a little longer then," Mrs. Saunders granted. "I will wait for you in the ball-room."

And when at last Creswick put them into the carriage, Mrs. Saunders, in the gloom of her own corner, had no word to say to the girl. Jane, however, still in the whirl and turmoil of her cruel awakening, that with every moment of thought grew more cruel, hardly knew whether her cousin was speaking or not. All the talk that evening had come to her mind as a confused and senseless jargon, and it was no better now. The rumbling of the wheels, the thud of the horses' hoofs had as much sense as anything else, and the silence of her own room was a painful vacuum. She dismissed the maid at once, and locked her door. She tossed her flowers into the waste-basket, her filmy draperies on to a chair, and cast herself, face downward, on the bed.

Hour by hour her eyes had been opening more clearly

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to the perspective of her past. Her childhood with Mrs. Saunders had been destitute of tenderness, her days barren of anything that could make a happy memory. All her life she had been schooling herself to a gratitude which she had never been able to feel. In the midst of all the luxury and careful duty done by her, she had been always hungry for a living, breathing love, a love that would have given her self-respect. She had no self-respect; she had been patronized all her life, had been made to feel herself a poor thing come of poverty-stricken parents.

Now, suddenly and without warning, she had broken from all her moorings, and all the landmarks of her life had been swept away by a flood of indignation that, unknown to herself, had been gathering in her pent-up heart. Her whole nature was up in arms against Mrs. Saunders, against herself. Her cousin for views, for years of insinuations, herself for permitting them, for accepting everything from a person who held them. Her father and mother were not failures; a large family and a small income did not mean beggary; poverty was no disgrace, and she should have resented this long ago. And yet, what could she have done? Her life had been given into the hands of Mrs. Saunders; she had had no right to be anything but grateful and obedient; and must she not believe that in her own way Mrs. Saunders loved her?

Grateful! Love her! She had betrayed her; had trampled on every tenderest belief of her heart; and the sudden fury of outraged faith had swept her whole nature into revolt against her protectress. Grateful?



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How ignoble the state of things that had brought her to this position, how spiritless her acceptance of endless favors that had at last merged into an almost contemptuous patronage. Patronage bred contempt far more surely than familiarity. Could she ever win to herself any respect for herself? Could she ever build up an individuality? Must she always despise herself so absolutely? Could she not go out into the world and support herself? Women did it every day. Only that morning she had talked to Laurence Creswick about it. She had been wrought on by Mark Witting's note; she had felt that she must change her environment; that she must get away from these associations that had become so dreadful. She had been so wounded, so humiliated, even then, and she had known only the half!

Even in the empty room she covered her face with her hands. She longed to cry out and tell all that gradually she was realizing of what she had missed, of what lately she had suffered. If she could only make herself independent, could find work, hard work, perhaps she could throw off this desperate humiliation of obligation to a woman whom she all but hated. Could she ever forget that cold voice, "He thought you an heiress—*my* heiress." All but hated? The only people whom she hated more were Mark Witting and herself.

She got up and began walking about the room. She was to blame, not Mark Witting. It was not his fault that she had idealized him. If once she had had the sense to look at him with clear eyes, she would have

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realized that a man who was dancing attendance on an old woman, in the hope of inheriting her money, could not at the same time be the ideal she had set up. What a blight to fall on a harmless life, an unprotected head!

Fool! how could she live with herself, and all her life lay before her, her long life? Work, that must be her saving, not retreating to her home; she would have to explain if she went there, to answer questions; she could not do that, not yet. Work was the thing; work must be her salvation; put all her strength into making this future a success. And if she succeeded, Mrs. Saunders would say it was due to her training.

She went back to her bed. She must not think of Mrs. Saunders, of Mark Witting; it put desperation into her heart. Why had she not trained herself for something? She sighed wearily. Had she ever been her own mistress for one moment of her life? And what could she do? first, how could she get away?

She sat up quickly and clasped her hands tightly, looking at the lamp with a wide, unwinking stare. Her candy-money, her birthday money, would not this help her? It was so little; she wrung her hands; help her to what? To run away!

She looked around as if startled, as if someone had said the words, "Run away." Run away; why not? Find a position. Her childish plans rushed over her; a maid like Fanny, a governess, like that first little governess; but how? Answer advertisements. How could she manage this? She racked her brain until at last weariness conquered her misery, and she fell

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asleep where she was, leaving the lamp burning, and only awakened when the maid knocked in the morning.

As Mrs. Saunders never appeared at breakfast, Mr. Saunders and Jane were free to bury themselves in their papers, which were only the papers of the evening before, but which suited Jane's purposes perfectly as to the advertising columns. Maids, governesses, housekeepers, saleswomen, typewriters, stenographers; column after column, and all must be experienced, all must be recommended. She had experience in nothing; she could give no references. If she could see the people and talk to them, she might win a place. But in order to see the people, she would have to be in New York. Would it not be wiser to wait until she returned to the city? She could manage it all so much more quietly there; and meanwhile she could use a little of her allowance in advertising. She could advertise under her initials, to the care of the paper, so many of the advertisers seemed to do that, then the paper would forward the letter to her. All the mail passed through Mrs. Saunders's hands. Simmons had brought her her letters of his own motion sometimes, but she could not ask him to do it; and a business letter in an unknown hand he would be sure to think an advertisement, and not bring to her. All day long she pondered, going through her duties in a perfunctory way, but with a steady quietness that kept in Mrs. Saunders's mind Mark Witting's warning; and after lunch she went up to her morning-room very thoughtfully.

All the excitement had gone out of the girl's manner,

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and the misery and defiance of the evening before had given place to a preoccupied intentness that needed explanation. What was she contemplating? And the elder woman was uneasy. So carefully had she always watched and ordered Jane, and Jane had been always so implicitly obedient, that she had not dreamed but that she knew everything of importance that came into the girl's life. She had forgotten—perhaps she had never realized—that the searching wind of surveillance unavoidably causes one to draw the cloak of reserve more and more closely about one. More than this, she had made the mistake of putting Jane's unfailing observance of her wishes down to stupidity; had, in a measure, despised her for it, only to find herself to be the dull, unseeing one. "A fool," she said to herself, "an old fool!" And she struck her writing-table with her closed hand, her white hand from which the child Jane had always shrunk. "An old fool!" she repeated. Mark had stabbed her with the assurance that he had not soiled Jane's ears with the knowledge of this ugly snarl; he had taunted her with "the last love of a woman"! She put her head down on the table. He had not believed that her heart had been empty; he had not realized that she had to be trampled on before the best in her would come out; and that in all her life he was the only person who had dominated her, who had put his foot on her neck. Wealth had brought her subservience. She paused in her thinking. Look back as she would, with all the new light of late developments to help her, she could not find one place where Jane had truckled to her, had

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flattered her. Jane had not been subservient; she had been obedient, and she realized now that this had angered her. She had never broken the girl's spirit or will; the girl had voluntarily put them aside, or, rather, had bent them through a sense of duty. "Such a fool!" she whispered. She had been so sure that her husband and his family were trying to make something, trying to gain money and favor from her.

"She had tried to be grateful," the girl had said, "but all was cancelled." What had she meant? What could she do? And to think that she had so quietly and so often refused Laurence Creswick while still holding his love; had made no show of it, apparently taking it as a matter of course. Plainly Creswick did not know that the girl loved Mark Witting. Yet, why should she be sure that even that knowledge would have quenched his hope and loyalty? What power the girl had! and she found her respect for her growing with every minute. She rocked her head back and forth a little on the table. And Mark had declared the girl to be loyal; she had been miserable because of the deception, and he had gone away to give rest to her conscience.

She rose quickly. He had not gone to save her good name, then! and a flame seemed to light in her gloomy eyes. "Such a fool!" she said again; "such a fool!"

She began to walk about the room restlessly. A gulf lay open across her path; she must be careful. Her idiotic fury, her stupid blindness had betrayed her into the wildest folly. She should never have breathed even to the walls her knowledge of the affair

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between Jane and Mark Witting. Jane and Mark Witting. She stopped short in her walk and wrung her hands together above her head. "Oh, my love—my love!" she cried under her breath, and covered her face with her hands. "Do not try to pose to me as a good woman," he had said, and the words had seemed to set her free. That he had pulled down all the veils, all pretences, had seemed a relief; after that it was she who had gone forward; he who had contradicted her, had ridiculed her. And she loved him. She did not spare herself in her arraignment, but when she lifted her face again, new lines seemed to have been drawn about her lips; and the anguish in her eyes should have made atonement for much.

It seemed not to be the anguish of repentance, however, for when once more she had resumed her seat, she said aloud: "I lost my temper, and that is usually fatal." What pure folly it had been. Perhaps it would have been wiser to have allowed the girl to marry Mark Witting. To let people have unhindered way was usually a sure revenge. Perhaps it would be wise to send Jane home, and ask for the second girl, Marion. She shook her head; her being sent home might be interpreted as punishment, she was afraid. Already she had risked too much. If Mark Witting should ever know of that drive from Mrs. Cumming's; she turned pale at the thought. No, Jane must not be sent home; then there was the possibility that Creswick might catch the girl on the rebound. Again, to send the girl away would be to acknowledge failure; she had failed, but why publish it? It would be wiser

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to wait, in the hope that pride would send the girl to Creswick. His love and money would give her liberty, would revenge her on Mark, would put 'cousin' out of her life. Anyone but Jane would count up all these advantages.

Again she got up and moved restlessly about. "And yet I meant well," she said aloud. "I did mean well in taking the child." Passing the window, she caught sight of Jane and Creswick going off with the golf clubs. She stopped. She had not been consulted; she had not been even notified; it was flat rebellion! She walked toward the bell, as if to ring for a servant, then turned aside. There were times for blindness, and this was one. The girl had declared her independence, but what more? The saving clause was Creswick's presence and patience; she must keep her hands off and let this do its work.

How exasperating! and where was Mark Witting? near enough to watch her? She shivered a little; easy-going men like her husband could be terrible; she had roused him once, long ago, and ever since, in her heart, she had been afraid of him. Why had he not beaten her, trampled upon her? she would have been a happier woman. A brute-beast she would have loved, or a sneering, scornful cynic like Mark. She struck her hands together. Mark, Mark, Mark! she would like to strangle him slowly; would like to torment him. He loved the girl, but that tortured her as well as him. She could not hurt him without hurting herself, except by marrying Jane to Creswick; that would be an almost mortal wound.

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He owed her money; that hurt him. Once more she covered her face with her hands; how he had fought her that time in town, and yet he had taken the money—because he loved Jane! She lifted her face; she need not brood over his love for the girl, she must accept that as a fact. She had heard it that day, when she looked into the arbor; she had seen it in his eyes as he returned her look, his angry, miserable, defiant eyes. She must realize clearly that he loved Jane, and work with that always in her calculations. Marry the girl to Creswick, that was the plan; and another punishment would be through the money she had lent him; he rebelled against that; she had that hold over him; she laughed a little. “That ring in his nose,” she said aloud.

She would not send Jane home; but sending for Marion to spend the winter was a good idea; it would soothe Jane, and perhaps mend her own mistakes; and in the spring she might send Jane home instead of Marion. It was worth thinking of.

Creswick, too, was puzzled concerning Jane, especially when one day, about a week after the concert, he came upon her in the post-office paying the post-master money and receiving a box-key in return. The color rushed into the girl's face when she saw him, but she made no explanation during the walk home, and he wondered if Mrs. Saunders knew that the girl had a private box. Of course it was all right, he said to himself over and over again, still it was rather extraordinary. Indeed, everything had been queer since that walk he had taken with Jane—she had never gone with



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him again—and since Mrs. Cumming's tea. Perhaps he had made the mischief by confessing his affairs to Mrs. Saunders, only that Jane had been queer before that, and since that Mrs. Saunders had been unusually cordial.

Nor had Jane been so meek as heretofore; she now boldly differed with Mrs. Saunders, and Mrs. Saunders permitted it—laughed at it—made light of it. She plainly was not coercing Jane; the tables had been turned in some way, and now the girl was hiring a post-office box! It was all right, of course, but what did it mean? And Witting seemed to have gone permanently. Mrs. Saunders spoke of him occasionally; Jane, never. Was he the man she had declared to be ignoble? What could he have said or done? She surely did not care for Witting, surely! Of course not; but why did she want a private box, and why did she seem so preoccupied? And she had lost her girlish frankness when with him, and was holding him at such a tremendous distance; and why did she seem now to live in a world of her own, and to have such a set purpose in all that she did? In the mornings, when he strolled over to the Saunders's, he always found Jane studying, and sometimes quite simple things. At last one day he said: "Do you purpose opening a school?"

"I don't know," she answered, quietly, almost taking his breath away.

"Entering college, then?"

She shook her head. "You remember my talking one day," looking up at him, "about supporting myself, and the dreadful conclusion I came to that I did

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not know how to do anything? Since then I have thought it would be wise to prepare myself to teach at least. I think that I could teach very little children."

"Will Mrs. Saunders let you go?"

"She says not; but—at all events there is no harm in being prepared, is there?"

"None in the world." Then picking up one of the books, "I might help you."

The color rushed into Jane's face. "Would you?" she said eagerly, "and—and then you could give me a reference." She had lowered her voice as if afraid.

"Of course."

"And it would be just between you and me?"

"Mrs. Saunders could not object to so laudable an effort."

"It is not her objection—" Then Jane stopped. "She likes you very much, indeed," she finished after a moment.

"She is very amiable; and if not against the wishes of anyone, we can study very nicely these idle mornings."

"I am not sure about her wishes," Jane answered, slowly, "and I shall not ask her; but you will be very kind to help me—the kindest friend I have ever had."

A smile flitted across Creswick's lips hearing the emphasis on "friend," and looking straight into the girl's eyes, he said: "What are friends made for but to help one another? If you would tell me your difficulties, they should be sacred, and I might help you."

The tears rushed into the girl's eyes, but she turned away her head quickly. "Play school-master," she

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said, with a quavering laugh, "and when I need a reference, let me come to you. Really, I don't know any arithmetic at all." She had winked her tears away by this, and looked up at him with shining eyes.

"Arithmetic, then; can you say the multiplication table?"

"Seven and nine always worry me."

"Very well; have it all ready for me when I come again, and do examples from every division in the first part of the book. You may know it all, of course, and this is only a preliminary canter to see what you can do. Of course you went to a fashionable school."

"No; I had governesses."

"And so will have everything to learn."

"I know French and German."

"How are you in history?"

"Very weak."

"I will go home and get some books, then." And taking his hat, he went away.

Something was wrong, very wrong, he pondered; and what was it? Perhaps she would tell him some day; meanwhile the lessons were an admirable idea. And two or three mornings out of every week found him and Jane really at work. Her eagerness, her intense earnestness puzzled him more than ever. She bent all her energies to the tasks he set her; confessed her ignorance frankly, yet was continually surprising him with some odd corner knowledge that was totally unexpected.

He was careful not to go to the arbor any oftener than usual, and Mrs. Saunders's maid reporting faith-

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fully every few days that Mr. Creswick and Miss Jane were reading on the bench, or on the piazza, or in the parlor, as the weather demanded, Mrs. Saunders compelled herself to let what seemed "well enough" alone, and put off suggesting that Marion should come. Mark Witting being safely away, this constant intercourse looked favorable for Laurence Creswick. "Calf-love" did not often live or wound very deeply; it was "the last love," as Mark had sneered. Creswick's plans for winning the girl were excellent, under the circumstances, though not wise, as a rule of life, for lovers. Indeed, the only mistake had been her meddling; and her best plan now was to keep quiet. For this autumn she would not change their resort for October, but remain where she was until they could return to town. She found herself strangely weary, strangely averse to movement; neither must Jane's affairs be disturbed; and whatever it was that she and Creswick were maundering over every morning, she would let them alone to work out their own salvation. Yes, she would give herself physical rest, at least; give up for a time until it was necessary to take a fresh hold on life and the world.

And to Jane life was a new thing. "I've struck on a rock," she said to herself, "and have knocked a hole in my side"—and she laid her hand on her heart, smiling a little—"and the cold, bitter water of experience has rushed in; has it put out all my fires, I wonder?" Her heart had been kept in cold storage, Mark had said; and when he laid his hand upon it, it had answered, as to the touch of a creator. He had frozen it

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again with equal facility. But now in place of love a purpose had come to her, and she was working with a will. She would make herself independent, she would build herself up; and after achievement, she would win for herself some self-respect. Work, action, strife, if necessary, but no more submission, no more gratitude, no more love. Work was best. She remembered some words she had read—"Men say crowns for foreheads, God says 'Sweat.'" God's gift was best; she would work; and so occupied was she that she scarcely heeded the repose that had come into her days through the cessation of Mrs. Saunders's exacting supervision. All that was different in her environment and treatment she put down to her own change of feeling; to her defiance of Mrs. Saunders, while Mr. Saunders was too much of a philosopher to ask questions about such a solid advantage as peace.

So the weeks moved along with apparent quiet straight up to the time when the move to town for the winter was at hand; then one day Jane experienced a sensation that, though hoped for, was unexpected, and was a decided shock. She had gone to the post-office to give up her box-key, when she found a letter. She looked at it a moment, as if afraid, then, slipping it quickly into the inside pocket of her coat, she glanced from side to side anxiously. It took only a moment to deliver the key to the post-master, then, going home, she shut herself into her room, locking the door. She took the letter out and laid it on the table, and a sudden terror came over her. What was this thing she was going to do? This common looking letter was a call

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to her ; a letter that looked as if it should belong to a servant, might decide her future. She could not go to common people ; she could not ! How dared she go at all ? How dared she go out from her carefully sheltered life into this unknown world ? She had never been permitted to think for herself ; she was ignorant, timid, weak.

She got up and put away her hat and coat, laid her gloves carefully in their box. She was all this, but she need not be silly as well. Then, with exaggerated deliberation, she opened the letter, and read—

“ J. O. In answer to your advertisement I write to ask if you will consider a position out of New York ? If so, will you call on me as soon as possible ? I shall require at least one good reference.

“ (MRS.) MARGARET FENSER.”

The peace of the weeks since her outbreak had calmed her ; the work with Creswick had absorbed her ; this call from the outer world, the possibility of which had faded into a dim chance, seemed to turn her whole life upside down by its unexpectedness, and frightened her. Her hands were trembling when she put the letter down—this letter that did not look in the least like the letter of a lady, that was not the letter of a lady—and repugnance was added to all the whirl of conflicting emotions which now possessed her.

She had fought steadily against any thought of Mark Witting ; the hurt was too deep for words, even with herself ; but now in this moment of decision the

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first thought was of him. To be out of New York was to be out of sight and hearing of him. It swayed her for a moment, then she put it aside; she must not be so weak but that she could face that contingency. This must not influence her; this move must be a matter of principle, not passion.

To remain would be a virtual acceptance of Mrs. Saunders's terms, which meant marriage with Laurence Creswick. A tremor went over her, then she sat still for a moment. Why could she not go home? All her dreams had centred round that old nursery, her lost fairy-land where so long ago the "trailing clouds of glory" had been torn from her ere their rightful reign was done; go back to where, perchance, she might yet find some fragments of her lost birthright of love and tenderness.

The tears welled up and over, but she did not move; this thing must be decided quietly. To go home to be a burden would be wrong; to go there only to come away again would be a useless struggle; indeed, it would be impossible. Her father would never allow her to go out into the world as a worker. Nor would they ever understand why she had left Mrs. Saunders, because they must never hear the story of all her lonely childhood. Let her parents hear the story of Mark Witting if Mrs. Saunders chose to tell it, but this other knowledge would be for them a bitter and lasting self-condemnation.

She took a picture from a stand near by. What a strong, patient face; she must deserve his respect; but how careworn. "'Little to earn and many to keep,'"

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she whispered. "Poor father." And Jim, her dearest playmate, who would have helped her father now, had been dead so long—so long. How worn and grave his face, how white his hair; no, she must not let herself add to that burden; she must work.

A decision reached, all excitement seemed to leave her, and very quietly she took up her pen and wrote—

MRS. FENSER:

"I am quite willing to go away from New York, and will see you on next Tuesday morning. I am unavoidably out of town until that time.

"Very truly,

"J. ORMONDE."

That would do, and she would mail it immediately, for fear of reaction. She would see this woman, whether she took the position or not.

"This must be our last lesson," she said to Creswick the next day. "We are leaving on Monday morning."

"So Mrs. Saunders tells me; but unless you are president of a college before the New Year, I don't see why we may not have some sensible mornings this winter; or will you have classes again?"

"No, there will be no classes," Jane answered with the quiet decision she had acquired of late; "and the sensible mornings may be possible, but remember, you have promised to give me a good reference if I need one."

"Of course; like this: 'For probity and ability, Miss Ormonde has no equal——'"



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"It must not be a joke," Jane interrupted, gravely.

"You will not trust me with your plans?"

"I trusted you that morning on the hill. I told you that I did not think it was honorable to stay with my cousin and yet have no intention of carrying out her views."

"I see." And Creswick looked deep into the fire. Mrs. Saunders's views were matrimony, and he—he had made a mistake in talking to her that afternoon at Mrs. Cumming's.

"And you will give me a really serious reference?" Jane interrupted his thoughts.

"Yes; and anything else under heaven that you can ask, if only——"

"Thank you," she said quickly; "you will help me very much indeed."

## XIV

“ Even so we leave behind,  
As, chartered by some unknown Powers  
We stem across the sea of life by night,  
The joys that were not for our use design'd ;—  
The friend for whom we had no natural right,  
The homes that were not destined to be ours.”

**I**T was sleeting, and with all his training Simmons could not conceal his surprise when, on Tuesday morning, Jane told him to order a cab for her. It was a most unheard-of proceeding, and, in addition, her expression was so strange that almost he felt it his duty to report to Mrs. Saunders. This, however, would please Mrs. Saunders and hurt Miss Jane; and, reflecting that the cab would come from a stable where the family was well known, and that a word from him to the coachman would insure safety, he let her go with only a “Yes, Miss Jane,” when she said that if Mrs. Saunders asked for her she would be back in an hour.

Jane had dressed herself in her simplest clothes, she had put on her oldest set of furs, and had provided herself with a written card, yet with all her effort Mrs. Fenser was decidedly surprised and a little overwhelmed at the apparition who came as the original of the advertisement. She looked expensive; there

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was about the girl a finish that meant the best things of this world; a repose that disconcerted Mrs. Fenser; and she came in a coupé, that, though not a private one, had evidently come from a very reserved stable. It had a mysterious look.

"It's dreadful weather," Mrs. Fenser began.

"Yes," Jane answered, looking from the window as if she had not before observed the weather.

"I'm not in the city for long," Mrs. Fenser went on, "and I wanted good weather to go about in."

"When do you expect to leave?"

"I am not sure."

"And will you want me immediately?"

"It isn't I who want you," Mrs. Fenser answered, quickly, and a wave of relief swept over Jane.

The hotel was one of which Jane had never heard, and though it seemed a respectable place, it had given her something of a shock. Then the woman herself was a little appalling. She looked to be a good woman, and in good circumstances, and her clothes were in the latest fashion, but the very first glance had made the girl almost ready to turn back.

"Last winter," Mrs. Fenser went on, "I was ordered South for my health. I didn't like the place the doctor sent me to, and I moved to another place in the same region of the country. It's in the middle South, a little town, but I liked the people, and I promised them that if they could raise the money I would select a teacher."

"Yes."

"They are plain people, but they are kind people,

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farmers and the like. They make a difference down there between farmers and planters, you know."

"Yes."

"Well, these are farmers, and they—a few of them—want something better for their children than the free school."

"Yes."

"And I don't think that you'll do."

"Why not?"

"Because—well, you'd not be satisfied. You look as if you'd been accustomed to a good deal."

Jane looked down at her clothes. She had felt rather shabby in her present attire, and in consequence a little depressed, a sort of foretaste of the poverty she was courting. Now a momentary wish swept over her to take this woman home with her, take her into Mrs. Saunders's presence just for a glance! It was only for a second, then she said: "They want a teacher, and I am willing to teach them; I think that is the only question."

"And after they've paid your way down there, and you don't like it, what then?"

Jane drew herself up a little. "I don't think that there is any question of my not fulfilling my agreement."

Mrs. Fenser, more puzzled than ever, asked for a reference. Jane drew from her muff a card-case, whose gold-mounted simplicity was exquisite, and from it a slip of paper bearing Laurence Creswick's address. "This is a gentleman under whom I have studied," she said, "and he will satisfy you, I think, and I will

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call again on Saturday morning." She rose, then added: "If you are satisfied with my recommendation, when will you wish me to go?"

"They are waiting for you, and the sooner you go the better," Mrs. Fenser answered, while she studied the address. She had hoped for a city address, where she could have asked questions. "Everything is arranged," she went on, "and they will take anyone I send."

"And you will wish me to leave at once?"

"The minute I am satisfied about you."

"Very well; good-morning."

And Mrs. Fenser, watching from behind the window curtain, decided from her air as she crossed the pavement and gave her orders to the coachman that Jane was decidedly somebody.

Jane herself was a little breathless. She might have to leave on the next Monday, and she wondered how she would accomplish it. As they had just arrived, her trunks were still in her room; that would simplify matters a good deal. She would pack one trunk with her plainest things; pack all her finery into her other trunks, and hope that Mrs. Saunders would send them to her sisters. And she would not take anything that Mrs. Saunders had given her as presents, but all that her Cousin Henry had given her, especially such things as could, in case of necessity, be sold, and she shivered a little thinking of being so poor as that.

She might have to go on Monday; she would have to go on Monday, for of course Laurence Creswick would answer promptly and favorably. She began to

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look out of the windows of the cab with a new-born love for the familiar streets; the ever-shifting crowd grew suddenly dear; the roar and the rush, the clanging bells, the thud of the horses' hoofs was suddenly almost like music. She could telegraph Laurence Creswick not to give a favorable reference?

Reaching home she wrote Creswick warning him of Mrs. Fenser's coming letter, adding: "And will you kindly forbear to tell her anything about me save that I am respectable and able to teach? You have been very good to me, and, believe me, I appreciate it very deeply. Wherever I go I shall write and tell you about it. And do not have any qualms of conscience as to what you are doing, it is all right."

From this time Jane moved straight on to the exciting climax of Saturday morning, when she went to meet Mrs. Fenser. She had had a reassuring note from Creswick, and had no reasonable doubt but that she would be engaged. She would have to find out about trains, and would have to buy her own tickets, and check her own baggage. How would she manage it. Would it not be better and braver to tell Mrs. Saunders, and leave openly? She shook her head. Mrs. Saunders would never permit it; would never permit her to leave; would telegraph her father; would stop at nothing that would prevent this step. No, she must get away as quietly and as quickly as possible; must take a morning train so as to leave before her cousin was up. Fortunately, Mrs. Saunders insisted on an early breakfast for Mr. Saunders and Jane, because of the servants, she declared, and because Mr.

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Saunders and Jane had nothing to do, and ought to get up early. This manifest injustice was now decidedly in Jane's favor. The expressman should come for her trunk at an early hour, even if it had to be held somewhere until her departure, and she would tell Simmons that it was a trunk which she was sending South. A perfectly true untruth, and she blushed a little; if only she had not to tell the story to a servant! She would find out all about the trains from Mrs. Fenser, and see about tickets and the like on her way home. She would leave a note for Mrs. Saunders, enclosing a copy of the explanatory letter which she would mail to her father on Monday morning. She was determined as far as possible to save appearances for Mrs. Saunders. She had no wish to retaliate; her only desire was to save her self-respect, to get away.

Mrs. Fenser was waiting for her; was perfectly satisfied with the recommendation which she had received, and was inclined to be very patronizing. She wrote down for Jane the route which she was to take, the probable expenses of the journey, and said that she had already written, and would telegraph as to the time of Jane's arrival. That the salary would be fifteen dollars a month, her board and washing and her ticket from New York. The other travelling expenses Miss Ormonde would have to pay for herself. Adding that as Jane had not said anything as to salary on her first visit, she did not suppose that money was as much of a consideration as a home.

Money meant very little to Jane. All her life things had been provided for her without her even knowing

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the cost; so now she did not know whether the salary offered was the usual salary in such a case, but she did not say so, because having shown her ignorance in not asking about the remuneration to be received, she did not want to show any further signs of helplessness.

"A home and independence is more to me than money," she said, gravely and so quietly that Mrs. Fenser at once began to feel a regret that she had not tried to get her for less. Not that Mrs. Fenser lost or gained by the transaction, but only that it seemed wrong to her for one to pay any more than one was obliged to pay. Then reflecting that Jane would have to pay for the sleeping-car, she felt that she had not made such a bad bargain after all.

Jane, meanwhile, wanting to ask a thousand questions, was filled with regrets for her own ignorance. How helpless she was; how she had lived in a dream until that she would have to depend on the man at the ticket-office to instruct her. And now that she was put to it, she did not even know where the ticket-office was. She must go there, however, directly from Mrs. Fenser's, and ask all the questions at once, so that on Monday morning she would know exactly what to do—any hitch might cause discovery. And walking boldly up to the cabman, she said: "I wish to ask about routes to the South; drive me to the proper office," and without a pause they trotted away briskly down the street, Jane sitting well back, afraid of being seen by some chance acquaintance.

She was excited and very nervous, and when she



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reached the office she could scarcely ask her questions. Indeed, she scarcely knew what to ask, and ended by showing the clerk the route which Mrs. Fenser had written out for her, and saying that she wanted a ticket to that point.

"We can sell you a ticket only to this point," and the man put his pencil down on the next to the last name on the list. "From there you take a local train. By leaving Monday morning you'll get there Tuesday evening; ticket, twenty-three dollars; sleeping-car, six. You'll have time to get your ticket on Monday morning. Leave this side at ten-fifty."

"This side?"

"Yes, ferry. That man back there attends to baggage."

Jane was a little bewildered, but went to the man designated to ask further questions. Again she showed Mrs. Fenser's directions. Yes, they would send for the trunk at nine o'clock on Monday morning; would check it at the house; she could pay now or then. She paid at once, and returning to the cab was driven home.

Nine o'clock. Mrs. Saunders would be safe enough; but Mr. Saunders would be reading his papers in the study. He never left the house until just before his wife came down-stairs. Why could she not excuse herself from breakfast that morning? It would cause too many questions. Mr. Saunders would have to be told just what she had decided to tell Simmons; it was a trunk being sent South. They would think that it was going to her mother for the younger girls. Mrs.

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Saunders always sent Jane's worn things down to be done over for her sisters.

Already she felt tired and harassed with the unusual sensations of deciding and acting for herself, while at the same time she was surprised that she could act for herself; she did not realize that the self-control of all her life had gone to make character, but only that she was doing more than she had thought herself capable of doing; as it was, the load of responsibility seemed terrible. How she got through Sunday she scarcely knew, and in church she was in a state of nervous terror lest by some chance Mrs. Fenser should appear on the scene. But she got home safely, and declined to go to the afternoon service. Never before in her life had she ventured on such action; not even since her revolt, which had been passive rather than active; and the color deepened in Mrs. Saunders's face. She refrained from words, but decided to send for Marion at once. Jane was becoming dangerously restive and must be kept quiet until the spring, then if she did not marry Laurence Creswick she could be sent home and Marion adopted. This would have no look of failure for Mrs. Saunders, or of hard treatment in the eyes of Mark Witting, and from the proceedings of Laurence Creswick and Jane up to the time when Jane returned to town Mrs. Saunders drew the conclusion that an engagement between them was only a matter of patience.

So now, though angry, Mrs. Saunders swept away in silence to church, and Jane sat down to write her letters of explanation. She wrote and rewrote; she

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tore up many sheets of paper, but at last she found herself with three notes lying side by side on the desk before her.

“MY DEAR FATHER:

“I am taking a step of which I am afraid you will not approve. I cannot rest any longer in useless idleness, and I am going out as a teacher. I have found the position myself, quite of my own motion, and by the time that this reaches you I shall be teaching my little school. I beg that you will believe that I am doing this from a good motive; but if you must blame someone, blame me only. Cousin Jane and Cousin Henry have not consented to my going, and have not written to you about it because I have not told them of my intention any sooner than I am telling you. As soon as I reach my destination I shall write to you. Believe that I am true to the best that I know, dear father, and trust me.

“Your loving daughter,

“JANE.”

“MY DEAR COUSIN HENRY:

“Do not blame anyone but me. I am running away to earn my own living. So much has been done for me that I am oppressed by my own uselessness. I am doing this entirely of myself, and please forgive me. All my life you have been so good to me; please be good once more and forgive me. I love you very much, and, if you will let me, I shall be so glad to write to you.

Lovingly,

“JANE,”

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"I am afraid that you will be very much shocked, Cousin, and that I will seem to have deceived you; but, as we have never been confidential, I do not feel that this is so much the case as it would be under other circumstances. I have had this in mind ever since the afternoon at Mrs. Cumming's, and have planned it carefully. I am going out as a teacher to a respectable place in the South. I do not give you the address now for several reasons. I enclose a copy of the letter which I have sent to my father, so that you can see just what I have told him. You are at liberty to make what explanations you please; my explanation to you is that I cannot continue to be dependent on you after what has passed between us. You will find all my trunks packed to do with as you please. I have taken only my plainest and most worn things.

"JANE ORMONDE."

All Sunday evening she read, or seemed to read; all Sunday night she packed; sorting, arranging, destroying, pausing only when she came to the doll's trunk.

The nursery was still her room, and she knelt down now in front of the doll-house as before an altar where much had been sacrificed. She had taken up the little trunk that had been her childhood's coffer to empty it, when the dead eyes of the staring dolls seemed to fix her. Horrid shams they had seemed to her when compared with her home play. There the dolls had slept in the real trundle-beds; had sat in the children's real

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little chairs about the big, real nursery fire; had swung in the trees and vines, just as the children did; had helped to cook when they played camp out in the big pine woods, and Mawm Elsie had gathered them up just as carefully as she had the children before they journeyed back to the house. Those rag effigies had seemed real; these dolls had seemed shams, and their house, and furniture, and painted fireplaces were all shams, and her childish heart had rebelled against them. Now they seemed to look at her reproachfully, and to her astonishment she found that she was looking at them regretfully. So often in her homesick misery she had sat there; so often in her loneliness she had gazed at them that the strongest associations of her life, she found now, were wrapped around that despised doll-house—that row of stark images. The shallow little apartments seemed to be overcrowded with regrets, with resolutions, with renunciations; her childish resolutions to run away were jostling her childish longings for home; were in their turn being pushed out of the way by her childish despair and renunciation.

Once more those resolutions had come to life; were this time to be carried out, and she had come for her childish store to help her. Almost it seemed as if the dolls, the furniture, the very kitchen pots and pans would rise and speak when she was gone; would tell Mrs. Saunders all the pathetic tragedy of the child's empty life. The tears came, and she was shaken by a sob. She started up, this would not do, and she walked quickly to her writing-table where she emptied

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the contents of the doll's trunk. A few articles of clothing belonging to the mother of the doll family, then the little purse which her Cousin Henry had given her to comfort her on the day of Jim's death. The blankness of that day, the misery, the mystery; but did she know much more now, was she suffering much less?

She crowded the doll's clothes back into the trunk; she had no time to think, to remember; she would have no time to sleep, and the maid calling her at the usual time the next morning found her already dressed.

"I wish you to leave my room untouched," she said, "until I come back."

The girl vanished, and Jane went swiftly down to buy her ticket, returning in time for breakfast. Simmons looked at her curiously as he let her in, but he held his peace. She poured out Mr. Saunders's coffee with her hat on, explaining that she was going out immediately after breakfast, and was up-stairs when Simmons came to announce that a man had come for a trunk.

"Yes, it is to go South," she said; "send him up. As it is not very heavy," she went on, "he will not need any help," and there was a deprecating look behind the light of excitement shining in the pretty eyes that touched the heart of the old servant, who had watched the girl from her childhood. Years ago he had reduced Mrs. Saunders to a proper appreciation of himself and his rights, and perhaps Miss Jane was about to do the same thing, perhaps some day even Mr. Saunders would do it. This thought made him

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once more hold his peace, not only so, but on passing the door of the study, where Mr. Saunders was reading the paper, he discreetly closed it, and further effaced himself by retiring to the pantry, so that Jane, with her bag clumsily concealed by a wrap thrown over her arm, left the house, as she thought, totally unsuspected.

Later, Simmons found two notes in the letter-box, and at lunch Mrs. Saunders said: "As Jane insisted on going home, I am glad that she has gone so early in the season, before I have sent out my cards; and just as Marion is coming on to me, it is fortunate," and she helped herself largely to the cold chicken which Simmons handed her.

Mr. Saunders did not answer, nor did he eat his lunch, nor did he come home to his dinner, leaving word with Simmons that he would dine at the club and go to the country early in the morning. It seemed a simple message, but Mrs. Saunders trembled uncontrollably when Simmons left her. Mark Witting belonged to that club, and if he were in town? She must take something to steady her nerves, for there was much to do.

In a cab she went to the telegraph office, where she spent some time, then home again to write voluminous letters. Every sound seemed to startle her, but the next day passed quietly. The third, however, brought a card, and though she turned her back as if to catch the light on it, Simmons could see the deadly pallor that spread over her face.

She entered the drawing-room slowly, closing the

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door behind her. No greetings were said, but there was a long look, on his side of suspicion, on her side of deprecation. "The girl went of her own accord," she said at last. "How did you hear?"

"That does not matter," Mark answered; "I heard, and I came to see, and, seeing you, I believe that she went of her own accord," then he turned on his heel.

"Will you not stop a moment?"

"No."

Mrs. Saunders was calmer now, and her eyes were regaining their usual expression.

"Jane's younger sister is coming to me," she said; "I had a telegram yesterday. You will call?"

Mark turned to look at her. "I stay in town because I am going to try to work," he answered, "to pay my debts."

"From the pictures we have had," Mrs. Saunders went on, "the girl is pretty. I feel quite excited about it. Dine with us next Monday, the usual hour; why give the world cause for talk?"

Mark stood still thinking. "No," he said at last, "the world must not be set talking about Jane," and without another look he left her.



## XV

“ I felt begin  
The Judgment-Day; to retrocede  
Was too late now. ‘ In very deed.’  
(I uttered to myself) ‘ that Day!’  
The intuition burned away  
All darkness from my spirit too;  
There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,  
Choosing the world. The choice was made;  
And naked and disguiseless stayed,  
And unevadable the fact.”

NEVER mind how true our aim, nor how high the principle by which we have been moved, there comes after every great decision in life an upheaval of doubt. Perhaps we have acted only after carefully weighing and analyzing each motive; after carefully considering every possible consequence; going slowly, and guarding each step; but even so, to our secretly appalled eyes each onward movement seems to reveal a new point of view, a new light, an unexpected shadow, and the demoralizing doubts crowd about us, thrusting cold questions in between each flash of hope, and chilling the very marrow of our bones. “ After all,” we say, “ how much we have staked, how reckless we have been!” And our poor humanity can only draw the mantle of outward as-

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surance more close, trying to hide from the world at least the gnawing doubts.

So it was on a dreary November day in the Southern hill-country, Jane, in a state of absolute demoralization, stood at the window of a small detached building waiting for her scholars to gather, and staring out on surroundings that in the autumn grayness looked, to say the least, dismal. All the nameless terrors that had beset her journey from the moment when she closed the door of her home in New York, voluntarily shutting herself out from all she knew, thrusting herself, alone and unprotected, into the world, all these were as nothing compared with the doubts that now assailed her.

There had been terrors of being absolutely alone; terrors of being lost; terrors of being found; terrors of losing her money, her tickets, her check; terrors of being in the wrong sleeper, of being spoken to, of being forgotten; terrors of being put out at a small junction in the dusk of a drizzling winter's evening. Small terrors that shut out for the time being the questions of real import—what she had left, and what she would find. Still these formless fears born of ignorance and a sheltered life were desperately real, and taught her surely that dreadful lesson of how a lifetime can be crowded into a few hours. All of these shadows had now assumed their proper place in the perspective of experience, and a new set of fears, which took the less answerable form of doubts, assailed her.

It had been a tragic moment when she closed the door of her home behind her, cutting her past life off

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so sharply, so decisively, and the sound of that softly clicking latch, that moved so easily and fastened so surely, had seemed to echo all up and down the street. She had paused for a moment, almost hoping that Simmons would come out to investigate, or that Mr. Saunders would come out on his way to the club. Then a ridiculous panic of losing her trunk, of being left, had seized her, and she had rushed away to meet innumerable other fears that now fell back into nothingness as compared with the shutting of that door. The dark green color of it came vividly before her; the shining brass knobs; the great door-mat, with the number of the house woven in; the small brass circle where the real latch was that had clicked so fatefully! She heard it now, it seemed to echo all about her, until she asked herself if she were perfectly sane.

Had she not been a fool to come away? Mrs. Saunders had trampled on her all her life; at the last had treated her cruelly. As far as she could see, Mrs. Saunders had only managed her as she managed everyone else, even her own husband. Mrs. Saunders had seen that she was being deceived by a man unworthy of trust; had unveiled him; ought she not to be grateful to Mrs. Saunders?

And this life that she had elected to live; this individuality and self-respect that she had determined to build up; what would it amount to? Was it worth the confusion and distress which she knew that she had caused? The distress to her father and mother, the confusion and mortification to the Saunders who had done everything for her? She ought to go back

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to them on her knees and ask pardon. But even that she could not do; the shutting of that door had been irrevocable. Irrevocable—the word filled her with a sense of despair that was overpowering. The words “too late” were tragic in a way, but they had a sense of accident about them; “irrevocable” had a sense of blunder, of final judgment, of a sorrowful great Angel that stood with flaming sword to guard forever the path one had left. Was there any suffering in life more dreadful than this terrible word expressed?

She must put it aside; to look back was madness. The only hope was to go on, to stand to the position she had taken. She must still know positively that Mrs. Saunders was a tyrant; she must never forget that the flesh of Mrs. Saunders’s hands was as firm and as hard as bone; she must remember the money, the soap, the rag-doll! How absurd! And Creswick should have remonstrated with her.

She turned away from the window restlessly, and went to another. From each one the prospect was the same. Tall, bare trees dripping with the fine mist and tossing wildly in the wind; the ground covered with fallen leaves, sodden and wet, packed down by the rain. In front, a stony road going down the hill and soon becoming the main street of the town. To one side, and a little back from the small building, a large, old-fashioned house surrounded by the never-failing piazza of the region. From the front steps a bricked walk down to the gate, and from the same front steps a little path, a mere line over the grass, to this small detached building which was called the

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"Office," which was the school-room, the scene of Jane's labors, and now of her bitter self-communings.

She had arrived the night before in a pouring rain; had been met by a fatherly man who had brought her to his home, where his wife and children had given her a welcome that was composed of kindly cordiality and unfeigned astonishment. The husband and father had seen only a handsome girl who was different from what he had been led to expect; the wife saw a girl who looked strangely like a very fine lady. What had Mrs. Fenser been thinking of! She could not give orders or even advice to this teacher, and how would the other mothers who were to share the expenses like this type? And in the memory of the housewife the room prepared for the stranger seemed to grow bigger and more barren with every step that they took toward it. The lamp she carried made only an oasis of light where she put it down on the corner of the old-fashioned dressing-table; their footsteps resounded forlornly on the bare floor as they left the bit of carpet beside the bed and made their way to the other bit of carpet in front of the fireplace, and the big tongs lapped its legs exasperatingly as she tried to push the fire into a blaze.

She laughed a little nervously as she wrestled with them, and Jane had said: "I am so glad to have an open fire in my room; it is beautiful."

Her words seemed to right the tongs, and Mrs. Dunlap pushed up the fire triumphantly as she answered: "Yes, we are old-fashioned, and love old-fashioned things. My husband would be lost if any-

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thing were changed, and so would I be; and it's just as well," she had added, looking up at Jane with an effort that made her words seem a little bit defiant, "for we couldn't have anything different if we tried. We are content, Miss Ormonde, and we hope that you will be."

"I am sure that I shall be," Jane had answered, confidently; then Mrs. Dunlap had helped her take off her damp coat, the satin lining of which had given her a turn, and had put her hat away on a shelf in a cavernous closet. She had opened Jane's bag for her also, and had looked with some dismay on the shining contents. This young woman was mysterious; with such evidences of wealth why did she undertake a little country school? For to Mrs. Dunlap a satin lining and silver brushes seemed to mean untold wealth, almost wicked wealth, and surreptitiously she had examined her guest's face. That was all right, she thought, but some things about her were strange. This was not at all the kind of teacher that Mrs. Fenser had promised to send, and she had gone downstairs to talk it over with her husband, telling Jane that her daughter Nannie would come for her when supper was ready.

The clean, unpretentious simplicity had pleased Jane, and after having done what she could without her trunk to remove the stains of travel, she had sat down in front of the fire to wait. But not even then had the real and serious questions of her actions come to her. Her first thought had been that her father and mother would just be hearing of her flight, and in New York

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they would be getting ready for dinner. Three days ago, at this very hour, she had been getting ready for dinner!

She had looked about her vaguely. Was it not all a dream? would she not soon awaken to find the maid at her bedside, saying, "Miss Jane, will you please get up and go to the early service, Mrs. Saunders says that she does not like the pew to be empty always"? What would Mrs. Saunders think if she could see her now?—or Laurence Creswick, or Mark Witting! She took up the tongs and made a lunge at the fire; the wrong log tumbled down, and the tongs pinched her fingers. She got up hastily and went to the basin-stand. Just then a timid knock had sounded on the door, and a little girl coming in, said softly that supper was ready.

"Are you Nannie?" Jane had asked.

"Yes, ma'am, and mother says you'd better shut your door to keep your room warm, and please to see if your fire's safe."

"Do you think it safe, Nannie?"

"Not very," and picking up the big tongs the child pushed the logs together deftly, then looked up at Jane, her big eyes shining out from between the two tight plaits of hair that adorned each temple.

"That's very nice," Jane commented, then taking the child's rough little hand in hers, she had gone with her down-stairs. There was quite a breeze in the hall and down the stairway, and she could hear the dismal pour of the rain outside; but a big fire sparkled in the dining-room, and the other children,

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looking awe-stricken and sleek, stood silently, each behind its chair; Mr. Dunlap mumbled a grace diffidently, and they sat down to a table literally loaded with food. The conversation had been more or less constrained, Mrs. Dunlap and Jane doing all of it, and the arrival of the trunk in a farm wagon was a great relief, for Mr. Dunlap, going out to give orders to the negroes, the children had followed to watch operations.

This had ended the last of Jane's terrors. She had arrived safely, and her trunk was successfully landed and under her own eye; she had not experienced any disagreeable occurrence, nor had she lost anything, and so relieved was she to have reached the haven for which she had embarked that she had gone to her bed and to sleep without one doubt as to the wisdom or righteousness of her course.

All this, the arrival and the subsequent peace of mind, seemed now to be weeks away; her breakfast, eaten by lamp-light, seemed days ago; the early dinner which she had just finished marked only the hour of twelve, and what should she do with the appalling amount of time that seemed to be heaping up on her hands. All the morning, between nine and twelve, she had been teaching, or rather trying to find out what the children knew. Ten children, ranging from six to twelve, and so far exceedingly well-behaved—three little Dunlaps, three little Tomkins, two little Millers, one little Wheeler, and one child named Beaton. Had she been as quiet as these children? When Mrs. Saunders took her had she been as unresponsive? As she remembered herself, she had



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teemed with dreams and longings. Were these children like that and afraid to show it? Perhaps outwardly she had been as still and as dumb, and Mrs. Saunders had not seen any deeper, and had not found her interesting—had kept her from a sense of duty.

Perhaps, after all, it was her cousin who had needed sympathy and pity through all these years. To be hampered always by an unresponsive, silent creature, who did everything from a sense of duty; who had never forgotten the loss of her few possessions. But even now, under all its load of doubt, her heart swelled at the memory of that far-off, lonely child. She had been terribly homesick, and doubtless sullen, and perhaps very troublesome to Mrs. Saunders. And now what distress and confusion she had caused! For even if they did not love her—and she knew perfectly well that Mr. Saunders did love her—think of their anxiety as to her whereabouts; as to her fitness to judge of people; as to her ignorance of so much that one ought to know before setting forth alone. She had been cruel!

She would write to Mrs. Saunders—to everybody—this very afternoon. She had found that her own name and the name of the town would be sufficient, as letters were not delivered. She would not be obliged to give Mr. Dunlap's name, and Mrs. Saunders could not write to anyone. And it would be something to do to go to the post-office every morning before school; those long hours which had seemed like half a day would be very well spent in going after the letters that came in the evening on the train, just as she had come.

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She did wonder a little that Mr. Dunlap did not go for the letters in the evening, but he did not, and she would have to go for her own in the morning.

Perhaps she ought to telegraph. Letters were so slow, and they had already suffered for thirty-six hours and more. What an idiot she was! The moment school was over she would run down and send telegrams to everyone. She ought to have done it the night before; of course no one would ever forgive her—they ought not. She actually deserved punishment, she who had looked on herself almost as an escaped martyr; had been afraid that something would be done to detain her or to turn her back. She had esteemed herself so valuable, and all the while she had been a burden, and as soon as they were assured of her safety her absence would be a relief.

The moment that school was over she would send the telegrams. Was there ever such an idiot? and again she moved about impatiently. Would the children never finish their lunch?—she must get those telegrams off. Fortunately it was clearing.

And this life that she had come to, what was there in it; what future? To vegetate here in this little country town on fifteen dollars a month. And she must be very careful of her clothes, for in unpacking that morning she seemed to have brought very few, and yet she had brought everything that had seemed to her to be plain and substantial. At all events, the large trunks of things which she had left would be a great thing for her younger sisters; that small good would come out of her flight—that is, if Mrs. Saunders

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would do with them as she had always done with Jane's worn things. And another thing, she was nearer to her home now than she had ever been before; her heart leaped; she drew her hand slowly across her eyes. Beyond the dark clouds of doubt a little light of dawn began to creep up, a faint tinge and glow of soft color that slowly but surely enlightened the dreary day. A brand-new realization began to take possession of her, almost bewildering her.

She had been so much absorbed by her wrongs, by her preparations to escape, by the terrors of her journey, by her doubts, that no thought of results had come to her until this moment. Now for the first time she realized that she had set herself free—free! She could go to her own home if she wished! A sort of exhilaration took possession of her, a grand reaction. Free—think of it!—free to come and go; free to be poor, to starve if she liked. All the blood in her body seemed to be dancing; what a wonderful discovery she had made; what a marvellous thing she had done!

All her life, whenever she had been placed in any position, if it were only sitting in a chair, she had been obliged to stay there until someone had been pleased to give her permission to move; now it was all changed, she belonged to herself—she was free! She had done wrong, perhaps had done Mrs. Saunders injustice; nevertheless, she was almost compelled to sing with joy. The possible sending home of her trunks was nothing, other wonderful good was emerging from the move she had made; the wrong was not, could

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not possibly be, in the step she had taken, but only in the way in which she had taken it. Her spirits continued to rise, and when the afternoon session was over she asked Mrs. Dunlap if, as it was no longer raining, the children could go with her to the telegraph-office. All the children seemed to have to go home in the same direction, and all were wild to escort the new teacher, all except little Beaton, her home was farther out in the country, and her father always sent for her.

"Is it very far to your home?" Jane asked.

"Not very."

"Then we will walk home with you first."

The child took hold of Jane's wrist with both hands. "I'd like to go to the telegraph-office," she whispered.

"Do you think that she may," Jane asked, "if we take her home afterward?"

"They'll be with you all the time," Mrs. Dunlap answered; "yes, I'll tell the servant."

It was down-hill all the way, and Jane walking briskly, the children skipped and trotted about her, and the towns-people they passed stared. Jane was a new sensation, and of course a teacher coming all the way from New York was much talked about in advance. Up to this time the town had not acknowledged that there were any social distinctions; and if some had looked down on some others, no one had ever acknowledged that they looked up, at least not since the Civil War had reduced them all to the same financial plane. But now a change had crept in, and the people who in secret had always looked down had

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drawn together and had taken their children from the public school. They had always wanted to do it, they said, but were only now financially able. And the retort came quickly that the financial ability was due to Ned Beaton; and to this there seemed to be no definite answer.

So the murmurs had crept about the town, and the people waited with much curiosity to see the teacher whom Mrs. Fenser would send; Mrs. Fenser herself having caused much comment as being able to spend the winter at the hotel and being able to dress as no one in Stony Ridge had ever been seen to dress. Unconscious of all this, Jane with her little troop went through the town to the railway station, which was on the other side with the post-office and the telegraph-office, and where she sent away her messages as quickly as possible. "Arrived safely; will write." Sending one to Mrs. Saunders, one to her father, and, after a moment's thought, one to Laurence Creswick—as he had helped her away, he would be anxious. It was the only atonement she could make, these telegrams and—success! She must succeed, she would succeed, there was no middle ground for her now.

The excitement that had taken hold of her was venting itself in the nearest thing—laughter with the children. She was young, she was strong, she was free. She would have liked to run races with them, and she laughed still more at the thought of the teacher running races through the town! Perhaps when they got out to the country once more, beyond the Dunlaps, then she could have a little run. She had had so few

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runs in her life; reckless runs, without any thought of onlookers or of propriety; and never without a maid to say, "Mind your dress, Miss Jane." What a long list of interfering maids she could remember.

Back through the town they went, Jane looking about her curiously, and as, on their return trip, the children reaching their respective corners turned off, watching them until they were out of sight. The children had grown quite friendly with her by this time, beginning by dubbing her "Miss Jane," and by asking her all sorts of questions. At last Nannie said:

"Mother says you're rich, Miss Jane, 'cause you've got silver brushes."

"You must not tell what your mother says," Jane corrected.

"My mummy had silver brushes," Tena Beaton put in, "but I don't know where they are, I don't know—" then she paused and looked up at Jane. She was a frail little creature, with hands like bird-claws, and beseeching eyes that at a moment's notice looked terrified.

"Many, many people have silver brushes," Jane answered; "it is the fashion; it does not mean anything. It's much nicer to live in the country than to have silver brushes." They were climbing the long street that would take them to their home on the hill-top, and beyond into the country where Tena Beaton lived. "And when we get out of the town," Jane went on, "perhaps we'll run some races."

"You, too?" the children cried.

"Yes, and we'll be so hungry that we'll eat up all

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the supper, and so tired that we'll go straight to bed and to sleep."

"I wish I could come and live with you," and Tena looked up longingly.

"You will come to school every day, and often we will bring you home," Jane said, and clasped the little hand she held more closely.

They had reached the top of the street by this, and passing the Dunlap's were out in the open country. A brisk wind was blowing, drying up the wet world, and driving the sullen clouds before it. Far down in the west there was a pale-green rift in the gray, long and narrow, that more and more glowed into burning gold as the sun, descending, neared it.

"Look!" Jane cried, "yonder is a big hole in the sky, see? The wind has torn it for the sun, and presently the sun will look through. Maybe he will see us and wink!"

The children were breathless.

"Shut your eyes tight," Jane went on, setting the example, "and see who will feel the sun first."

Every eye closed to the extent of wrinkling all the little faces. There was a tense silence; a blaze of red sunlight that glorified the gray, and a cry of childish trebles—"He's winking—he's winking!"

"And now we'll have a race," and picking up her skirts, Jane sped away. On and on she went against the bracing wind, losing gradually the sound of the children's feet. Suddenly the road ran into the shadow of a wood. The girl stopped abruptly. It was so dark, it must be later than she had thought, and she

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had left her watch in the school-room! Perhaps they had passed the Beaton place. She was not really fit to take care of herself, much less these children. Here they came, poor little souls. Joey Dunlap first, then Nannie, and Mamie, and Tena, all of them breathless.

"How fast you can run!" and Joey looked up in admiration. "I didn't know ladies could run."

"And how'd you know that this was Mr. Beaton's place?" Nannie asked next. Then once more Tena seized her hand.

"Is this Mr. Beaton's place?" and Jane looked over the old picket fence gray with lichens, into the woods beyond.

"Yes," Tena answered, "but it's far to the gate and far to the house. Oh! I wish I could live with you, Miss Jane."

"Perhaps we'll find a princess sleeping in this wood," and Jane peered over the fence. "Who knows?" and she laughed as she looked at the round blue eyes of the little Dunlaps, set in such stolid little faces, framed in such very sandy hair. Was she not daring to expect to find imagination in them? But not so Tena.

Presently they came to two solid stone posts, and between them a wide iron gate. From this a road wound away into the woods. The little Dunlaps looked with some awe at Jane as she swung the gate open and led the way in, while she observed with some curiosity the sudden irruption of good work and material into the long length of old fence. And yet the stone posts did not look new, nor was there any spe-



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cial finish about them, and the gate, too, was simple enough; still, it gave Jane a different feeling to the place. For awhile the road was like any other rough way through a forest, then suddenly there were signs of clearing; then an abrupt turn and the wood showed almost like a park, and was evidently of long standing. The trees were large, and the land sloped upward to where on the highest spot a house stood. The grass was thick and fine, and all about were cows and horses grazing. It was pretty, and Jane liked it; it looked as if it were a home where happy people lived, and had lived for years.

Nearer they went, the children not heeding the cattle that gave Jane a little tremor, but advancing eagerly.

"We've never been here before," Nannie whispered, and Jane's imagination received a fillip.

Soon they saw that about the house there was another fence, enclosing it and a large garden from the intrusion of the cattle, and that the house, a square, two-story building, was of brick. The children had become very quiet, and Nannie had straightened her own and her sister's hat in a responsible, motherly way she had, and had pulled down Joey's jacket. Jane watched, she was finding these children more interesting than she had thought, and wondered what prompted Nannie's propriety. On nearer view the place lost the homelike look. The garden was neglected, and the house seemed entirely shut up. In fact, it began to look deserted, desolate, and while wondering more at Nannie's desire to appear well, she wondered less at Tena's evident reluctance to return

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home. Perhaps they were plain people living in a good place, and so occupying only the back of the house. Then she remembered that Mrs. Dunlap had spoken of a servant being sent for the child, and the father's not wishing her to go about alone, and though servants seemed to be plenty—Jane had seen a number at Mrs. Dunlap's—still Mrs. Dunlap had spoken as if Mr. Beaton were a person of importance, and decidedly Tena looked far above the common.

At last they reached the garden-gate, and Jane paused. "You are safe now, Tena," she said, "run in."

The child looked up. "Would you kiss me for good-by?" she asked.

For a second Jane hesitated. Would it mean ten kisses every morning and every afternoon! Her own empty childhood rose before her and she stooped to be caught in a strangling embrace.

"You should save some of these kisses for your mother," she said, breathlessly.

The child's arms dropped at her sides, and turning, she went slowly away up the garden walk and around the house, never once looking back.

"She hasn't any mother," Nannie said in an awe-stricken whisper, "and nobody knows if she ever had any!"

"Come," Jane said, "let us walk faster."

## XVI

"The lost days of my life until to-day,  
What were they,—"

"**T**HANK you — was dreadfully anxious — have written. L. CRESWICK."

It was just seven o'clock. The day was done, and Jane, the early supper over, had been sitting by the fire in her own room facing with some dismay the long evening that stretched before her, when this touch from the life she had left roused her with a shock that was startling. Since the morning she had been in a brand-new world, she had thought of herself as entirely cut off from her past, as almost another being, and now, here was Laurence Creswick almost speaking to her! A thrill went over her; they all knew where she was; would anything happen? Would anybody come?

The day with all its happenings, its experiences that were interesting because they were so new, all faded away, and her thoughts flew back to what she had left. She was in the same old world, the same old country, tied and glued to the same old life by innumerable, indestructible wires, and stamps, and shining lines of steel rails! And the world was small, and the country was smaller, and time and space had long ago been annihilated.

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That morning she had suffered acutely; that afternoon she had actually played like a child, had given vent to some of the youth that had been shut away in her for all these years; she had practically forgotten her trials in the pure joy of what had seemed absolute freedom. She had run against the wind, she had winked at the sun, had stopped breathless in the shadow of the wood, had been affected by the little timid, wild child, and the seeming mystery that surrounded her. And she had been happy, actually happy.

She held the telegram away from her. For a moment she hated it, hated Laurence Creswick, hated herself for having revealed her hiding-place. All her suffering, all her humiliation seemed to have caught up with her again, horrid shapes speeding across the country to lay shadowy hands once more upon her. Why had she revealed herself! It would have been enough to have telegraphed her father. She would burn this telegram and not answer any letters. She held the flimsy paper toward the fire. The heated air fluttered it, and would carry it unharmed up and out of the wide chimney to float away on the wind, and perhaps to meet her again to-morrow. She took the tongs, she would hold it down in the red coals; the tongs lapped, and the yellow paper fluttered to the floor. She looked at it for a moment, then took it up, fate was against its destruction. She was silly, and Laurence Creswick was very kind to be anxious.

She laid the telegram on the table, which she had pulled close up to the fire, and there the lamp-light

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fell full upon the few words and the signature—L. Creswick. Of course, she could not escape; no one ever escaped from anything. Nothing was ever annihilated, words never ceased to sound; deeds never ceased to effect; thoughts never ceased to operate. The whole universe was filled with these influences that held us down, and pushed us back, and met us armed at every corner of life. People ought to teach this to children; warn them of the lengthening chain that was soldered to each soul, to each link of which hung some act, or thought, or regret. If they clanked, these chains, what a furious noise there would be! If we could see them, how terrible would be the sight! No, there was no escape. Already all the people she had run away from were down on her with their telegrams, and letters, and eyes, and hands, and mouths full of her past life!

She leaned back in the big splint-bottomed rocking-chair with its homely crocheted tidy, and closed her eyes. Picture after picture came up before her; vivid, speaking, moving pictures of various people from her old life, in various unexpected connections. Some of them she had not thought of particularly, and in positions she was not conscious of having remembered. Kaleidoscopic views that were unexpectedly, strangely characteristic. A pose of the head, a turn of the body, a pause in their going, a gesture of the hands, they were caught in her memory just so, somehow, and were more vivid now in their absence than ever before in their presence. Miss Witting's shaking head and gnarled old face, the chuckle as she said: "It's your

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hand, child," and her own wonder that anyone should think that anything was hers. Mrs. Kennet's cynical smile as she pushed Mrs. Saunders's pet dog aside with her foot, not kicking it, but longing to, and Jane, the unnoticed child, watching her curiously. And Mr. DeLong, putting his head back and laughing silently as Mrs. Saunders turned and walked away from him. And Fanny, the maid, putting something into her pocket out of Mrs. Saunders's drawer; she seemed to see again the expression of the girl's eyes as she watched the door, while she closed the drawer softly! She had never spoken of these things, she had been afraid, and what an atmosphere of deception seemed to have surrounded her cousin. Did people attract to themselves the atmosphere that was really theirs, and did the kind of people who suited that atmosphere wander into it and become their companions?

And Mrs. Saunders, she could recall her in a thousand different poses, a thousand different scenes, but one with her lips drawn thin with a smile, and her eyes like two dull, red flames as she said: "He thought you an heiress—*my* heiress!"—this one came up always first as with the sudden flaring of a flashlight. And Mark Witting framed by the greenness of the arbor; the poise of his well-set head, the turn of his square shoulders, the peeping sunlight bringing out all the red and yellow gleams in his mustache so carefully up-curved, in his close-clipped pointed beard, the whiteness of his forehead, the gleam in his eyes, and the words— She rose up quickly, stood still one moment, then sank down again. If they came

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after her! She would never go back, never—God help her, never!

She sat still a moment as if recovering herself, then her thoughts ran on. And she would not go home either until she had proved herself. If she failed here, well, she was not even now on the lowest rung of the ladder; she might succeed in some trade or in service. She would do anything rather than acknowledge defeat, than go back a suppliant. But would anyone come after her? Again Mrs. Saunders's face seemed to flash before her eyes. She was still under her influence, still afraid of her. She should be ashamed that she still shrank when she remembered those smooth, hard, white hands that had always seemed so relentless. These things had been in her imagination from the first day in Mrs. Saunders's home. And her father and mother had thought of her as happy, as fortunate. They must never know, never. Their letters had been always so tender, so gentle as if to do away with any feeling in her heart that there was lack of love. The pain of it would be too great for them.

She rocked the big chair a little, making an uneven sound on the bare floor that recalled her suddenly to her surroundings. She looked about her at the clean, draughty, big room, with its simple, scanty furniture. The best they had, such kindly people. Fifteen dollars a month, and no future. She was there for the especial purpose of teaching these especial children, and however much she might succeed, she was not at liberty to enlarge the school. She could expect no increase of salary. Fifteen dollars a month. The only

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thing in view was a higher position. She would need more knowledge. She looked up at the mantel-piece where her few books, chiefly text-books, stood. She should have brought more, she would have hours and hours when she could study; time for all the things which her life as the child of fashionable people, as a young lady in fashionable society had precluded, and she had no books. Perhaps her father could send her some from home. She remembered a big room walled with books—no, it would cost him something.

She got up and walked about a little. What a wilderness she was in. She took up Laurence Creswick's message. He had been very kind to her, very considerate. He had advised her to go on studying. Again she looked up at the books, a condensed history and an advanced arithmetic! Better than thinking, than recalling. It would take ages for these children to learn enough to cause her to study in order to keep ahead of them, save, perhaps, the little Beaton, she looked quite different, a higher type, more delicately bred. And Nannie's extraordinary statement, "She has no mother, and nobody knows if she ever had one." Poor little children, how they blundered along making so many unappreciated efforts to adjust themselves to the grown-up, puzzling world they found about them. Efforts that were not only strenuous, but painful, when analyzed. And how few people ever tried to adapt themselves to children. Driven in upon herself, hopelessly lonely, she had pondered much. That old life—that cruel, haunting life!

Again she moved about. A month, a week, a few



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days ago, her only desire had been to get away; only that afternoon she had been content, nay, had rejoiced in the sense of freedom, and now a creeping misery, a sense of rebellion at the thought that she had found her vocation, her future, in this poor little school, these few little children.

She paused to listen, it was raining again. How it sounded on the roof. She drew aside the white cotton curtain and let out a long piercing ray from the lamp. As far as she could see, as far as the light could reach, there fell the rain straight and glittering, with now and then a rapid slant as the wind came round the corner of the house. No light anywhere. All the neighborhood had gone to bed. There were no neighbors. How lonely. How straight the rain fell; how hopeless. Far out over the empty hills it was falling; all along the desolate clay roads it was falling, all in the dark woods. Nothing was stirring but that hopeless rain, that wild wind. Out over the empty hills she seemed to see it slanting down, she seemed almost to feel it. How lonely. Presently, nearer, and below, she found something that caught the light from the lamp and reflected it steadily. She put her hands each side her eyes and peered out. What was it? A roof, the roof of the school-room. She dropped the curtain and for a moment stood still. Her vocation. Her life narrowed down to this! Shut in by these hills, shut in with these people—these people! She could almost hear the amused laughter of the world she had left, could almost see their unbelieving eyes. Individuality, self-respect, freedom? Free to stagnate, and once, oh,

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once, her life, her heart had seemed so full! The empty hills, the desolate roads, the lonely woods, the shut in life. Free!

She covered her face with her hands, making her way slowly to the bed, sobbing as she went, sobs as deep as the sobs of her childhood, as hopeless, and with a surer hopelessness. On and on, until at last they seemed to expend themselves, then her mind began to work once more. The cruelty of it all the years back and back. And when a gate had opened in the blank wall of her life, and a vision had shone through; when her heart and soul had awakened; when she had stood with her hand on the bar—cruel! Why had he entered her life, why had he not found out before he sought her. Had he loved her a little at the first, would it have been possible to simulate it so perfectly? Why not believe that he had been true for a little while. If only he had died. But if he had ever loved her would he have been so deliberately cruel at the last, would he ever have told Mrs. Saunders? He *had* loved her, let no one deny it, let no one deny it!

She sat up and looked about her, then her thoughts went on. Could she ever regain her own self-respect, could she ever forgive him? Was she called upon to forgive him? She threw herself back on the bed. Ever forgive him. Could she not hate him? Forgetfulness were better. Know that she was maimed, accept that as a fact, and work with what was left.

She lay still listening to the rain, watching the flickering light from the fire as it played over the white-washed walls. Nobody need know the smallness of

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her sphere, nobody need know anything about her, and if they laughed, what harm, this life was far more honorable than a life of dependence. She could save her money and go home some day, that was good; she could save her money and some day help her father, that was better. Spilled milk could not be gathered up again, what use to weary with weeping over it.

The little clock on the mantel-piece struck nine. Only nine. Her Cousin Henry had given her that clock one day in Paris. He and she had slipped out together while Mrs. Saunders was with her tailor, and he had bought it for her as a travelling-clock, and that morning she had thought what an air it gave to the high black mantel-piece. The tone was very sweet in a far-off, fairy-like way, and it had ticked her through many uninteresting hours of her strictly regulated life, and through the hours she had thought happy; now it would go with her through the working hours. She must study; Laurence Creswick would advise what to go on with, and she would send him some money to invest for her in the proper books. At first she had thought of him as rather stiff, as cold. Skimmed milk, Mark Witting had called him. Mark Witting with his poisonous passion, his false heart, his slack principles, laugh!

The fire fell in; perhaps it would roll out on the floor. Nannie had warned her about that, and she sat up quickly. Roll out indeed, it was everywhere! She seized the small hearth-broom and began to sweep the coals back into their proper place, after this she worked

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hard with tongs and shovel. When all was arranged, she sat down flat on the floor, tongs in hand, wondering how she could make it safe for the night. No fender; she could put some of the logs out of the wood-box around like a fence. It might do if she could insure that the logs would not get hot and catch in "the dark and middle of the night." Long she sat there pondering; remembering the high fender in the old nursery; remembering the trim little logs that burned in Mrs. Saunders's fireplaces, sawed just to fit, and not a speck of ashes ever left from one day to another. These logs had been cut with an axe, and some were a little too long and had to go in on a slant, and the ashes from last night's fire, and the fire that had been banked up all day, were there in soft, gray piles going down to a glowing heart of heat, how pretty it was. But how to manage for the night. There must be some received method, she should have asked Nannie. How would the tongs do—the shovel and tongs crossed; they declined to interlace, and rattled down on the bricks. She must not waken the family. Then a bright thought came to her, she would drag out the dogs and cross them! She put out her hand, fortunately only one finger reached the andiron, and was instantly withdrawn, how foolish not to know that it was hot. She looked at the delicate little tip; to-morrow it would be blistered.

The andiron idea was a good one, however, and getting a towel she proceeded to arrange them as she had decided, then she resumed her seat on the floor with her arms around her knees, watching the fire. Yes,

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she would send some money to Laurence Creswick and ask him to select some books. He would know better than she what she needed, and these long evenings, growing longer as the winter advanced, she would carry on her reading and studying. She could accomplish a great deal. And she must write to her father, to her Cousin Henry, and send it to the club.

## XVII

“ That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright ;

But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight.”

IT was a very plain, two-storied house ; artists would have called it ivory-white, ordinary folk would have said that it needed more paint. The green blinds needed paint also, but in spite of this, it seemed to harmonize with the vividly blue sky above it, and the deep almost bronze-green of the pines and live-oaks about it. It had no architectural claims either. The piazza that ran around three sides of its lower story was very deep, with old-fashioned round, tapering posts. It had been added to also, in various ways, spreading out into shed-rooms and the like, but it was big, just as Jane had declared it to be, and the one wing that extended to the height of the second story, had the old nursery in it still. The outlook was over marsh and river; the background was a pine barren, and along the bluff on which it was built there was an occasional palmetto-tree, tall and stately, standing alone, and sharply silhouetted.

The barn, the out-buildings, the stables, were all at the back, a small farm practically, while the fields and the negro quarters, and the barns for the crop, were a mile or so away, and on the banks of another and larger

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river. Over all there was a repose, a simple homeliness, a comfortable, quiet effortlessness that would have soothed the most troubled soul. The chairs on the deep piazza were battered because being comfortable they were much used. The furniture within was the same. The old furniture shining with use and rubbing, the newer furniture, filling gaps left by the fortunes of war, or called for by the increasing needs of the family, did not look so well; it was not so good, and had yielded to treatment in a weak way that demanded much repairing. But here, as elsewhere, there was the same effortless comfort; a serenity that extended also to the study. The walls were lined with books in the old-fashioned way from floor to ceiling, windows and doors and the fireplace making the only breaks.

The occupants of the study, however, did not seem so serene. They were very silent; the mother sitting drooped together near the fire, the father leaning against the corner of a bookcase, and looking out of the window that stood open down to the floor, and gave on to the piazza. The piazza, the old garden, the bluff, the marsh, the blue horizon where a point of wood ended in a misty opening which meant the sound, then the sea. It was the sea that he seemed to be looking at, that or something else beyond his ken, and it was something sad, something painful.

Two days before a long telegram from Mrs. Saunders had been sent over from the station, a short letter, in fact, in which she had asked for Marion to be sent on at once, not waiting for clothes, or packing, or any-

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thing, everything was provided for, but to leave on the first train after the telegram was received. That it was going to be a wonderful season, and they wanted Marion, and wanted her at once; explanations in writing were on the way.

This had come on Monday evening. Marion had seemed to lose her wits with excitement, while the parents, thinking only of Jane's joy in having her sister, had, with many blessings and in all faith and hope, sent Marion off as soon as possible. Now, on Wednesday two letters had come from Mrs. Saunders, and one from Jane, and the whole universe seemed upside down! They did not know their child save through letters, they did not know Mrs. Saunders save through letters, and how were they to judge. The letter from Jane had been opened first; it was not long, but it took the mother's breath away, and she had paused in her reading with a pleading look at her husband. The letter was to him, but he had given it to the mother to open, and she had been reading it aloud.

"Gone out as a teacher," Mr. Ormonde had said slowly; "where is that telegram?"

"I thought that Marion had been sent for because of Jane," the mother answered.

Mr. Ormonde had found the telegram by this time and was reading it. "No word of Jane," he said, slowly, "only 'we' all through, and, of course, I thought that meant Jane; and dated Monday at twelve o'clock. When is Jane's letter dated?"

"Sunday."

"Open Jane Saunders's letters."



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"Both dated on Monday," was answered; "one in the afternoon—that one says that she is stunned, that Jane has run away."

"And the other one?"

"Is all about Marion's coming on, and of the delightful winter she hopes the two girls will have, and that Marion's coming is to be a surprise to Janey, and that she is so impatient that she has sent for Marion by telegraph."

"And no word of any kind from Henry."

In the silence that fell, sounds rather tumultuous for a school-room came from where Billy was teaching some of his younger brothers and sisters. Tom was away at college, Billy was preparing under his father, and between times taught those of the children who were old enough to learn, and now there were indications in the air that some kind of a riot was going on; but the mother, who was usually on the alert to pour oil on the troubled waters, did not move, did not seem even to hear, while the noises, smothered by distance, seemed to make the silence of the study more tense.

"No word from Henry," Mr. Ormonde said again. "I don't understand. Have you Jane's letters?"

"Every one, from the very first that she wrote."

"And she could not write when she first went there."

"No."

"I don't understand," Mr. Ormonde repeated, and took up Jane's letter, reading aloud: "I cannot rest any longer in useless idleness, and I am going out as a teacher!"

"And she had found the position for herself," Mrs.

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Ormonde interpolated, "and has not told Henry or Jane."

"No, but she does not say that she is sorry to leave them, and Henry should have written."

"Perhaps he is stunned, too."

Mr. Ormonde took up Mrs. Saunders's letter. "My dear Cousins," it began, "I scarcely know how to write to you. Only an hour ago I sent off a telegram and a letter begging for Marion. Doing it, of course, chiefly on Jane's account, our dear Janey, and now only a moment, a little moment ago, I have read a letter from her saying that she has gone! I do not know how to write to you, and yet I must, for Henry is prostrated. I have not telegraphed this dreadful news to you because in her letter to me the child says that she has written to you, and I pray that before this reaches you, you—we—will have heard of her safe arrival somewhere. And what will you think of my asking for another child when I seem to have been so negligent of the first? But believe me, she has in all these years been my first thought. Scarcely has she ever been out of my heart or my sight. Everything possible has been done both for her mind and her body, and from the very first moment of her arrival—a little, tired, homesick child—" Mr. Ormonde dashed the letter on the floor. "God forgive me—God forgive me!" he cried, while a spark seemed to lighten slowly in his grave, quiet eyes. "I am afraid that I put a little helpless child into a strait place; a little helpless child for all these years, and she has never told me, until now she has broken away—God forgive me!"

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"Oh, no!" Mrs. Ormonde cried, "Jane Saunders is a just woman, and no woman could be unkind to a helpless child. And surely, surely, some word would have slipped out in the child's letters. Read on," and picking up the letter she put it in his hand. "Read, see what she says about the new fashion of the day that the girls should have professions," and her husband, not looking at the letter, she read aloud: "I am so much afraid that your child has become imbued with the modern fad, the idea that it is strong and right to go and make one's own way in the world. I have done my best to keep her away from this element, and especially did not permit her to have what is called the 'higher education' for women. But, of course, in the world she has met the new woman, and I am afraid that this headstrong movement is the result. I cannot express my sorrow, and Henry is too grief-stricken to write. He feels as I do, that you will blame us. That we have had your child for all these years, and that she should have loved us too much to have treated us in this way. I have only material things to show you to prove how we have tried, at least, to do everything possible for Janey, and I will send you her trunks, all that she left, for you to use for the younger girls, and if in the face of our common calamity you will let me keep your Marion for this winter at least, or for as long as she is happy with us, I shall thank you from my lonely and bereft heart, and be only too grateful to be allowed to do everything in my power to make her contented, and also will allow her to judge between us as to how dear Jane was treated. You have a right

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to pass judgment on me, and we will constitute Marion the judge. Oh, my poor cousins, how I suffer with you! God grant that you have had some word of the child's safe arrival somewhere. She has not given us an inkling of her plans. God help you!

"Yours in deep grief,

"JANE SAUNDERS."

"You see, dear, it all seems to be as she says; Janey is young, and we do not know how headstrong she may be."

"She was a gentle little creature," the father said, "and with the truest eyes I have ever seen. For all these years I have missed her; I have never forgotten how she looked up at me when she said good-by—God forgive me!"

"We thought it for her good."

"I was a coward not to be sure that I could support my own."

"Times were so hard just then."

"And you did not want to let her go, you gave up because I said it."

"And we are not sure that we did wrong; wait and see."

"Wait—wait! When I do not know where my child is? A girl going about all unprotected; and who knows what money she has?"

"God will take care of her."

Then it was that Mr. Ormonde went away to the window and stood looking out steadily as if trying to find with his eyes the far-off, unseeable ocean. He did

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not know how, he could not place it, but somehow—somewhere—he had been deceived. He seemed to know his child, something in her letter spoke directly to him. The sending for Marion seemed to mean more than was on the surface; there was too much of coincidence; the grief in the letter came too easily, went into too nice sentences, into too well-chosen terms. How little he knew that woman, and yet he had given a little child into her keeping. God forgive him! No, he had given the child to his more than brother; surely, surely, he had been true to his trust. Had he? Was there not a promise given that the child should come home to see them? and something had always prevented? He should have thought of this before; how time had drifted by and still he had had faith. So many children, ten in all, only little Jim had gone.

He turned quickly. "You remember, Mary," he said, "how at the last little Jim called for her, and we could not get her? We should have brought her home then."

Mrs. Ormonde came to his side. "She was in Europe, don't you remember?" putting her hand in his arm, "and they had done so much for the child, and were doing so much for her, it would have seemed ungrateful to have taken her away then when they had learned to love her. We have done all for the best, and God knows it."

"But where is she now?"

"Safe somewhere; we shall hear soon."

"Then I shall go and fetch her."

"No, don't make up your mind to that. In the

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case of a young girl one must be careful, one must consider the world. What might not be construed out of such a sudden return home?"

Mr. Ormonde's eyes flashed. "I'd——"

"And make matters worse. I will tell you now that every day of every year I have missed and yearned for my child—my first-born—with your eyes, with your nature—I loved her doubly."

He drew her closer.

"But love and duty descend, you know, and parents must give more than they can expect again—must give themselves. I do not grudge anything that I have suffered, but now because of my sufferings you must heed me. Mothers' wisdom is born in the heart, you know, and so is truly wise. Something has happened, and that something has made the child go away. She is escaping, and she wishes to do it in the least possible conspicuous way. She says, 'Trust me, dear father, that what I am doing is for the best.' We will trust her."

"And not know."

"She is trying to spare us; let us wait. No one would understand a girl, for no reason at all, returning from a luxurious home filled with pleasure to a home in the dull country; but going off for herself, and Marion going on to take her place, this is reasonable. This is easier to explain, even to our own children—wait."

Mr. Ormonde moved away. "I will ride over to the station," he said, "there may be news."

She watched him walk toward the barn, stood still,

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with the tears gathering, and it was not until she heard the steady gallop of his horse that she wiped her eyes and turned to meet the culminated rebellion that, from the school-room, was advancing on the study to demand arbitration.

Later, Mr. Ormonde brought back Jane's despatch, "Arrived safely; will write." And though he knew where she was, he agreed to wait until the letter should come. But now that his mind was relieved, a little hurt feeling was developing that Jane had not taken him into her confidence. Surely she should have told her parents. And that night he wrote Marion a letter, which, opening, she found marked "Private," and within, the most carefully worded but most uncompromising order to come home the very first moment that she felt unhappy, or on the first shadow of an intimation from anyone that she was in the least in the way. He would have ordered her home at once but for his wife. And Marion smiled as she read. Smiled at her pretty self in the long mirror before which she sat; smiled at the maid who was doing her sunny hair; smiled down on all the soft lace and ribbon that enveloped her; smiled still more as her eyes wandered to her little feet in their silken stockings and satin slippers. She shook her head. No one should ever feel her in the way; no one should ever make her feel herself in the way! And she tore the letter up into minute, very minute fragments. Her sister Jane was a mystery. And she moved a little that she might realize the softness and fineness of her new apparel. How delightful! She had never really had clothes before, but only coverings for her body!

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Mrs. Saunders herself had met her on her arrival. Such a handsome woman, and such a dream of a carriage! She was so taken care of, so comfortably put in, so instantly irresponsible for anything. And Mrs. Saunders kissed her so gently, so tenderly, and with tears in her eyes. "I'm so unnerved," she said, "you must forgive me. We heard of Jane's safety only last night."

Then Marion's eyes had grown wide. "Janey's safety!"

"Yes, you don't know, of course; the very day I telegraphed for you, she ran away; she left before I came down in the morning. I am not strong, and I never come down until luncheon, and she was gone! The servant who took my telegram and mailed my letter to your father brought me Jane's note telling us good-by," she sobbed a little. "That was on Monday, and it was not until Wednesday evening—last evening—that we had any news from her. It has been terrible! She seems to be teaching somewhere in the South, and we cannot understand it. I am so much afraid that your father will think it our fault and send for you."

Marion moved uneasily.

"If you will only persuade him to let you stay, dear, to give us another trial, it will be a great boon to your Cousin Henry as well as to me."

"Of course, and I shall write at once, and I will stay. If Janey is safe it will all come right; but I don't understand."

"Nor do we, we cannot understand, and your Cous-



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in Henry has scarcely spoken since Monday; he went to the country for a day, but he was too miserable, and came back. He was wrapped up in Jane, and now he cannot seem to look at me, he associates me so with our child—for she seemed our child. And he may even treat you in the same way. Jane will have a great deal to answer for, for she has spoiled a happy home."

And Mr. Saunders's greeting had been pretty much as his wife had foretold. "If ever you are unhappy," he had said, "come at once and tell me, and I myself will take you immediately to your father," but he did not once look at Mrs. Saunders nor speak to her. All this Marion had written to her mother, her view of things colored, of course, by days of unspeakable bliss among tailors and dressmakers and importers of exquisite luxuries, everything that a girl could want, and Mrs. Saunders would say: "We must be happy this winter with what New York can furnish; in the spring we shall go to Europe and put the finishing touches." And Marion had said to herself, over and over again: "How shall I ever leave it all!"

So when her father's letter arrived, so stern in its tone, so uncompromising in its commands, she tore it into minute fragments. No one must ever feel her in the way, no one must ever make her feel herself in the way.

## XVIII

“The end crowns all,  
And that old common arbitrator, Time,  
Will one day end it.”

“WHOSO loseth his life shall gain it.” The principle of this strange, immutable law, that is verified before our eyes every day, works in many ways. We usually confine it to spiritual things; we usually think of it only in connection with the lives of people who visibly put off one environment to take on another, apparently without reward, and there it works, of course, but it works in other ways also; it works in physical things just as immutably. Make an effort to lose something, to conceal something, and see what happens. The objectionable thing turns up on all occasions. You come upon it in the depths of old chests, in the remotest top shelves of darkest closets; thrown into the waste-basket, it peeps through the meshes; into the dust-bin, it appears on the tip-top of the topmost pinnacle of the scavenger's cart, and seems to smile at you serenely as it jolts away; then what happens? You find that that very thing could have been used in a dozen ways. Or take the cases of murderers, of thieves; concealment, the losing of the thing seems to be impossible. It is not fable that blood cries from the ground, that the dead come back, that our

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good and evil thoughts and acts constitute themselves blessings or furies to track and overtake us.

So it was that this law was now working in the case of Mrs. Saunders. In her own world Mrs. Saunders herself had filled her whole foreground. Her house, her servants, her horses, her friends, her engagements, her Jane, her husband, her charities, her daily, hourly self-abnegation before all these things, was the unfailing theme of her talk. Everything taken and judged only as it related to herself, everything coming in as a background for her restless egotism. But on Jane's trying further to efface herself, the strange thing happened that, even to Mrs. Saunders, she loomed up to the exclusion of all else. People asked after her incessantly, pitied Mrs. Saunders, commented on Mr. Saunders's looks, the change that had come over him, or on Marion's being quite pretty, but without her sister's charm. Just here Mrs. Saunders would say: "Yes, I spent much time on Jane," but only to see with astonished eyes that people did not seem to put Jane's attractions down to this source.

Then her husband had changed radically. A kindly, perhaps lazy man, the girl had meant much to him. He had felt that perhaps his wife's rules were rather rigid, but the child looked well and made no complaint, responding to all his advances gently, sweetly, with a look in her eyes that he did not understand at the time, but that later he had found had been caused by fear for her parents and their poverty. He had tried to answer the look in her eyes by all sorts of gifts; by taking her out in a frolicsome way when his wife was occupied;

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by jocular comments on the "Higher powers," when they breakfasted alone together. His aim in life had been peace, and a desire to help the man whom he loved as a brother. The girl's going, slipping away, escaping as out of a prison had come to him as a tragic revelation of many things; had soured all the milk of human kindness in his nature that had made him so easy to live with; had seemed to dry him up, as it were; to take the spring out of his spirit and the juices out of his body. He was changed, tremendously changed, and his wife was uneasy.

Next, Marion was a study. Marion had grown up in a family republic, and spoke her thoughts, and made her comments with a frankness that might very easily prove a great danger. It had been so easy to manipulate her husband, and she had begun so early to train Jane, that she had never really had to arrange things, but only to give orders; so much so, that at the last she had overstepped the limits of her power and Jane had, in a way, defied her. Marion required thought and study; her husband required thought and study; her explanations to the world, that must not be excuses, they also required thought and study; so it was that Jane, in trying to lose herself, had loomed up big and strange as a shadow cast on a mist, and filled the whole foreground of Mrs. Saunders's life.

At her own home, too, Jane had come to the front in a way that she had never done before, especially when Marion's first letter arrived. A rapturous letter, telling of all that Mrs. Saunders was planning, and of the depression that had seized on Mr. Saunders since

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Jane's leaving. "Mrs. Saunders," she wrote, "who cannot stand the name of Jane any more, and makes me call her 'cousin,' is bearing up wonderfully, and answers all the questions about Janey so sweetly and kindly, and of course there are a great many. It is very hard on them, and I don't pretend to understand Janey, but it could not have been any lack of kindness that drove her away, for cousin fairly lavishes things on me. And cousin says that she is going to write to Janey, which I think will be very kind and forgiving of her."

The mother was puzzled, the father was troubled, and, thinking that he had waited long enough, and that Jane was the only person who could give the reason for her action, he wrote to her immediately as he had read Marion's letter, suggesting that she should come home to her own people—there was room enough and to spare—and give some explanation of her course.

This letter might have caused Jane tears if she had not chanced to read it on the highway. For several days, without success, Jane had gone to the post-office in the morning before school. So far from rushing after her, as she had feared, they seemed to be ignoring her, treating her as if she were in disgrace—all, at least, save Laurence Creswick; he had written instantly: and while waiting on the others, she had run the gamut of feeling from fear to surprise, to pain. Her father did not trust her, she had said over and over again, nor her mother, and she could not blame them; she had not explained; she had elected never to explain; and what might not Mrs. Saunders have written? What matter,

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what matter? she had run away because she could stand the life no longer; if she explained, her father and mother would scarcely be able to stand their lives. Let be—let be.

Then she had deferred her walk to the office until the afternoon, sometimes taking the children with her. This afternoon, however, she had made the expedition alone, and had found two letters. She had come away slowly through the town, hesitating to open the letters, and apparently entertaining all of her emotions at once. She had paused at the gate of the Dunlaps, but had not gone in. She would walk on; all of the beautiful afternoon was before her; she would go up on the hills; she liked the high uplands, where the wind blew so fresh and free, and the crickets cried so ceaselessly. There was a sort of cynic mirth in the crickets' song sung at the fading of the year, a shrill cheer for death and desolation.

And as she walked she read; first the note from her father, that would have called forth the tears, save for her surroundings, and if, further, she had not held in her hands a letter from Mrs. Saunders, the first page of which dried up all possibility of tears, for in it was the first intimation that had reached her of Marion's having gone to take her place. She looked again at her father's note, but there was no hint of it; he was too much occupied in trying to forgive her. She drew a long breath and turned once more to Mrs. Saunders's letter.

Slowly she walked, very slowly, going over page after page, the firm writing filling each page closely.

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Slowly and more slowly, reading carefully, breathlessly. The pages were many, and the envelope slipped from between her overful fingers. Down it fluttered to the road, followed her for a little while, driven by the wind, then a stone stopped it; then on again, until a cross current drove it against one of the square stone gate-posts of the Beaton place. Another little gust took it under the gate and up the road, then laid it down, address upward, precisely as if it were an unopened letter dropped by some careless hand. Presently Mr. Beaton, walking slowly, smoking, came upon it.

“So this is the way that rascally Isaac brings my letters!” he said.

He did not quicken his steps, nor when he reached it, did he stoop quickly; nor when he had secured it, did he make any apology to the absent servant. He read the address, “Miss Jane Ormonde.” That was the new teacher sent for by the exclusive set in the village! He reached the gate, and, leaning his arms on the top of it, he looked up and down the road. There she was, walking away from him, reading; reading absorbingly the letter, probably from the envelope which he held. He glanced at it again, and glanced again at the receding figure. It was graceful, it was young; she walked well, too: and the handwriting on the envelope was the handwriting of a cultivated person. Possibly she had a broken nose, or was cross-eyed; something must be amiss to make a person with such a back and such a walk come so far down into the wilderness to teach a little school. He looked again at Jane’s receding

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figure. The road ran very straight and broad, and beyond this thickly wooded level, that even in winter made a shady place, it led away up a long, steep hill, between fields, one of the desolate roads; a road at the mercy of all the storms of heaven, with no comforting homestead for many a long mile. Just now it lay under the slanting light of the afternoon sun, and Jane was clearly silhouetted. She was nearing the top, where she would disappear, and he watched her idly for a moment as more and more of her came above the hill and against the sky. Once more he wondered a little, then looked at the envelope, as if deciding what to do with it. Presently he laid it on top of one of the gate-posts, where it would be clearly visible, and put a pebble on it, then turned back slowly toward the house.

And the letter. "My dearest Jane;" it began. Jane longed to stamp on it. "Dearest!" She read on: "I cannot forget the many years when you were as my own, even if at the last you stabbed me to the heart by your method of returning all that we had meant as kindness. There was no necessity for you to steal away as you did, confirming my long-fought fears of your being secretive—may I not say underhanded?" The color blazed in Jane's cheeks; her eyes were burning. "If you had told us, told us of your great unhappiness, or discontent, rather, we would have sent you home gladly—it seems ungracious to say it, but a little more gladly than perhaps you imagined. And all this while I was planning a pleasant surprise for you. The very day you left, I had telegraphed for Marion to come; urging her to come as quickly as pos-



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sible, thinking to make you happier. Her welcome was necessarily saddened by your action, for your dear father and mother having faith in me, sent her on by the next train; and it was not until she arrived—finding me a wreck from anxiety and your Cousin Henry a changed man—that she heard of your desertion of us. And when I say that your cousin is a changed man, I do not speak it lightly. You will realize it when I tell you his greeting to Marion. He kissed her coldly, then said: ‘If you do not find yourself happy, you will be kind enough to tell me, and I, myself, will at once take you to your father.’ And he so kind, so hospitable, so affectionate! There are ways in which you could have wounded me alone and not have dealt almost a death-blow to one who was always so eager for your love that he left all the disagreeable management and the disciplining of you in my hands. And I—well, I do not know what charges you can bring against me, except your rag-doll, and my saving you from Mark Witting. But to turn to pleasanter things: We find Marion charming. Sweet, bright, exceedingly pretty, and very vivacious. Yes, we no longer find ourselves a dull and silent trio, save for what I managed to say, striving so hard to lighten up our overcharged domestic atmosphere. Marion is really a light in the household, so original, and you may imagine what she is to me, so responsive, so appreciative, so delighted with everything. To shop with and for her is a joy; and she looks so well in her things. We are to begin the season with a large reception in December, to introduce Marion, just as we introduced you; then we are to have

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several dinners, and Wednesdays in January, then the opera-box, of course, and I think we are going to have a very brilliant season, the only drawback being your Cousin Henry's great depression. He never smiles, and seldom looks up from his plate or his paper. The other day we met Mr. Witting; he seemed to be very glad to see me, and pleased to meet Marion, who got on very pleasantly with him. He is to dine with us very soon. In a book-shop we met Laurence Creswick, and he and Marion seemed to have an affinity for each other; she likes him far more than she does Mark Witting. Well, my dear Jane, I must say that I am very sorry for you; sorrier, perhaps, than I am for myself; for I, at least, have nothing to regret, and am only grieved for you, for it is one of the saddest things in life to watch the wilful blunders of the young—casting away their friends, their opportunities, their future. Poor things! For you, I dread to think what your future will be—lonely, poor, warped, lost in the wilderness as a village school-marm! Heavens! I shall try to show in Marion what my wishes were for you; and if there is such a thing as success, I shall find it for her, even to the extent, if necessary, of making her my heirless. I shall always be glad to answer your letters, and to help you pecuniarily, when you need it, as assuredly you will, but I am surprised and grieved that you have not had the grace to write to your Cousin Henry.

Always your well-wisher,

“JANE SAUNDERS.”

Jane drew a sharp breath and looked about her in a dazed way. She felt as if she had been beaten

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down by a shower of blows—well-aimed, deftly planted, neatly padded blows, that had left her deaf, and blind, and senseless. She shook her head as if after an actual physical stroke, then the last words in the letter came back to her, letting in one clear ray of pure light, that shot sharply across the dark chaos of her feelings. She *had* written to her Cousin Henry, had sent it to his club: and that he had not mentioned it, showed that he understood, that he was on her side. God bless him!

She quickened her step; she felt a desire to wear herself out in some way. On and on, following the yellow road between the lines of rail fences, between the empty fields, sometimes up-hill, sometimes down-hill, tramping, tramping, trying to get away, trying to wear herself out. On and on, not heeding the distance, not heeding the hour. Fighting over again all the doubts, all the pain, all the hesitation, all the questions that she had seemed to blot out, that she had blotted out, by coming away. Wisely or foolishly, the terror was that she *had* settled them, that she had cut herself off, that she stood alone.

She paused in her going and a sudden sense of desolation seized her—actual, physical desolation. How far away she was at that very moment, and she had been warned! She turned and began to run, only a little way, then the road began a short ascent; she would walk up the hills and run down—run down all the descents, run whenever she could. She had not met anyone as she came, why need she meet anyone in going back? It was Saturday afternoon. She ran

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faster ; this was the worst of all afternoons. On and on she sped, the tangible fear doing away, for the time being, with all the unnamed sufferings driven in on her by Mrs. Saunders's letter. The last long hill, then the Beaton place. She felt safer, even though this was the darkest part of the road. Then the Dunlap's gate.

As she laid her hand on the latch, she looked about her slowly. It was still quite light ; people were only beginning to leave the town ; she had been very silly. The firelight flickering through the dining-room windows, the children's voices as they played at the other end of the yard, her own windows open and staring like blind eyes, all brought back to her the long, long evening that lay before her. Why had she hurried ? why had she been afraid ? To have been murdered on the highway would at least have ended it all, would have given Mrs. Saunders such a text on wilfulness, on ingratitude. No, she would never let Mrs. Saunders have her as a text ; she must be cautious, she must succeed. She had been foolishly fearful on the highway ; she had been thinking foolish thoughts just now about murder and the like ; she could make an effort at least to control herself, her thoughts, and get through the evening. She had to live all her life with herself, with her past as a background, and the sooner she learned to do it the better. She would spend her evening in reading her one book—the condensed history ; she would read until she was sleepy, then she would go to bed, and if she laid awake all night, she would bear that, too. The next day she would go to church, Methodist or Presbyterian — she had her

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choice, the Episcopal church having been burned down—and in the afternoon she would write to her father and to Laurence Creswick. She ought to be ashamed not to have answered his letter sooner. And she would take the letters to the office early on Monday morning and would carry out her idea of sending to Laurence Creswick for books; she would send the money-order, she would make a new beginning in self-control.

Suddenly, as she leaned there on the gate, a picture of one of the little pious books that Mrs. Saunders had given her long ago, of readings for every day, came to her. She could remember the white and gold cover and the unholy scolding that had been given her because of the first stain, a tear, on that cover. It rose up before her distinctly as a picture, and she could almost have repeated the extract on "Beginnings." The divisions of time being each a beginning, and she remembered how weary it had made her feel, and how hopeless her beginnings of days and of hours had been. This Saturday would be a beginning, and next Monday would be another beginning, and all the Mondays after that, and all the Tuesdays, and all the Wednesdays, and all the hours, and minutes, and seconds of all these days. And the same little children would come every day, and the same preacher every Sunday, and the same laundress—she shook her head; no, she could change the laundress. There was saving grace in that, and she flung open the gate, choking a sob down in her throat.

## XIX

“O blest is he whose will is strong,  
He suffers, but he will not suffer long.”

JANE granted herself no respite on Sunday, no putting aside of disagreeable things. All day long, whenever she passed her table, the two letters, from her father and from Mrs. Saunders, stared at her until she seemed to be absorbing them word by word. All Mrs. Saunders's motives, the motives of all her life and being seemed to grow clear before the inner sight of the girl's heart, and to be sinking sure, deep roots. She could not put into words what she felt; she did not seem to be able to agree with herself categorically what Mrs. Saunders was, for, through all her growing realization of the woman, something seemed to elude her. It was as if there were some shadowy spot, which, if touched with light, would reveal the whole mechanism of motive, thought, and act; a lost key, which, once found, would unlock all the mystery; meanwhile she could not write to Mrs. Saunders; perhaps she never would again. She would not avoid thinking of Mrs. Saunders, however; would not avoid remembering; would have no dark places in her life where she feared to look.

But when the afternoon came and she sat down to write to her father and to answer Laurence Creswick's

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letter, the task was harder even than she had expected. Not to justify herself to her own parents, never to tell, of course not, and when she was done, she felt a sense of physical weariness out of all proportion to the apparent energy spent. The letter to Laurence Creswick would be hard, too, but from a different cause. She had decided that it should be cheerfully light; the letter of a contented person. She went to the open window, she pushed up the fire that was scarcely necessary in the balmy weather, she rearranged the few books on the mantel-piece, and all the articles on the dressing-table, then she looked in the glass. She was pale, her eyes looked tired, there was a weak curve to the corners of her mouth. She could not afford to have weak curves. She took her seat at the table in a determined manner, took up Laurence Creswick's letter, and suddenly a sentence stood out which made her eager to write. She had overlooked it, or had forgotten it, or it had loomed up because of the lurid light thrown out by Mrs. Saunders's communication, and she seemed unable to write rapidly enough.

"I always think of the South as a wide, wild, lonely region," Creswick wrote, "sunburned in summer, and tourist-haunted in winter, with lynchings thrown in for excitement when times are dull, and I am wondering what you find to do, and if your life is endurable." She seized her pen; no one who saw and talked to Mrs. Saunders and to Mark Witting must think of her in that way. She began with an explanation of the money-order which he would find enclosed, and the request that he would select the books which he thought

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she most needed; then she went on, and her cheeks burned and her eyes were shining. "As for my life," she wrote, "I am quite content, and think more of myself than I have ever been able to think before, almost becoming conceited because I am self-supporting. Think of it! I, a useless butterfly, rising to this height! I used to be so weary of the eternal round, the eternal treadmill of society. I used to liken myself to the wax ladies in the shop-windows, always turning to show off my beautiful clothes. To misuse a poet—

" ' Her life was turning, turning,  
In mazes of heat and sound.  
But for peace her soul was yearning,  
And now peace laps her round.'

Turning, turning, that was it; seeing the same things, doing the same things at every turn, smiling the same smile. Sometimes I used to wish that I *was* a wax lady with a wax head and a wire heart. This sounds ungrateful, but it was only the old story of the square stick in the round hole. Mrs. Saunders has been always a social success, and that was her ambition for me. Alas! I have repaid her in very ill fashion. In spite of it all, however, my contrition and the rest, I'm afraid that I would do it over again. My life is my own now, and I can go to the dogs even, if I like. And the South is not sunburned, nor wild, nor lonely, nor have I, as yet, been invited to any 'At Homes,' with lynching as a feature of the entertainment. As for tourists, as it is not yet mid-winter, I cannot give you any statistics; but I am sure that this little town will not



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be over-run. My school numbers ten, boys and girls, ranging from twelve years down; they are very well-behaved, and as this is a select and private school, which I am not at liberty to enlarge, I shall have time in which to improve myself after the most pious fashion; hence I send for books. I beg that you will not put yourself to any inconvenience about them, as any time will do. To you I owe so much, both as teacher and as friend, and be sure that I shall never forget it. Indeed, so distinctly do I remember it that I am asking of you one more friendly office. Give my regards to anyone who remembers me, and think of me as satisfied and successful; especially successful, for I happen to know that I am giving satisfaction just as a maid would or a cook; is it not funny?" She added some final phrases, signed her name, then read it over. It was not brilliant, but it answered her purposes. The tone was light and sufficiently cheerful; she had said enough about her surroundings not to seem to conceal them, and if all of it were told to Mrs. Saunders, or if Mrs. Saunders should ever see the letter, she could not find in it anywhere a note of regret.

Gradually, by the time that she had mailed the letters on Monday morning, it came to her that she had done more than she knew; that in trying to convince Laurence Creswick of her contentment, she had crystallized her own views; had strengthened herself in her own estimation. She *had* come away for principle, and whether or not she ever accomplished anything, she had been right to assert herself; and instead of keeping Mrs. Saunders's letter as a scourge with which to disci-

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pline herself, she would destroy it. She would get it at once and burn it. No sooner said than done, she fetched it from her room and put it into the school-room fire, holding it down with the tongs, watching it as it curled, and fretted, and fumed in its red-hot bed.

"Have you not punished it sufficiently?"

She turned, dropping the tongs with a clatter, and saw standing in the open door a man, with an amused smile on his lips, who looked as if he had stepped out of the world she had left.

"I have come to make your acquaintance," he went on. "I am Mr. Beaton." They shook hands, then he picked up the tongs. "Had you quite finished your *auto-da-fé*?"

"Quite."

He bowed. "Your place is bare," he said, looking about appraisingly, "and will be cold as the winter advances. And you seem to be going on in the old Southern way, a big fire and the door open; do you like it?"

"It is picturesque."

"You people from the North are always looking for the picturesque when you come South; and the old, and the quaint, and the barbarous!"

"I did not come with any special expectations."

"Or missionary views?" smiling again the same amused smile.

The color rose in Jane's face. "I have come as a pilgrim and a stranger," she said.

"So? and I have come to tell you that you have *carte-blanche* where Tena is concerned."

"Thank you."

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"I am the grateful one," he answered; "and now I will bid you good-morning." And he went away, slapping his riding-boot with his whip.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Dunlap," Jane heard him call; then through the window she saw him go up on the piazza and follow Mrs. Dunlap into the house. He was not there very long, then he walked down the bricked path to the front gate, carrying his hat in his hand. How well set his head was; what an easy walk he had; how sure he seemed of himself; and when he put on his soft hat, pointed down over his eyes, he needed only a long plume to fulfil all her ideas of cavaliers. How quietly he had looked down to her, and around the school-room; and now that he was gone, she began to feel provoked; almost angry; why had she permitted him to patronize her? And her anger budded and bloomed into wrath when, later, Mrs. Dunlap walked in, holding some money in her hand. "Your travelling expenses," she said, extending the bills to Jane.

Jane drew back. "My ticket, Mrs. Fenser told me," making no motion to take the money.

"Did she? I didn't understand. I beg your pardon; but we agreed, at least Ned Beaton agreed, to pay your travelling expenses."

Jane answered, coldly, "My bargain was my ticket."

"I don't know." And Mrs. Dunlap looked troubled. "Ned Beaton gave me this for your travelling expenses, as was agreed, I thought; won't you take it?"

Jane shook her head. "I'll take the price of my

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ticket, Mrs. Dunlap." And she began to write a receipt.

"He won't want a receipt," Mrs. Dunlap demurred; but Jane persisted.

"I have been trained to give and take receipts," she said, with a backward glance at Mrs. Saunders, who had always insisted that she was teaching Jane business when she made her write and sign receipts for stamps, or any small sums of money she happened to give her, and at the end of the month to add them all up, reflect on the amount, then give a receipt in full. At the present moment Jane was angry; it did not matter with whom; but that man with his clear, watchful eyes and his amused smile should not patronize her; and as the children came in, poor Mrs. Dunlap went out, carrying the rejected money and puzzling over Jane.

Jane had not meant to visit her irritation on Mrs. Dunlap, and, remembering Mrs. Dunlap's worried expression, she decided to explain; and yet what explanation could she make? Think as she would, she could find no motive that would have made Mrs. Fenser try to over-reach her; would have made her offer less than she was authorized to offer; there was nothing for her to lose or gain by it, so this man offering her her traveling expenses was almost insulting. He looked as if he were a very thoroughbred gentleman, but this attempt belied his looks and had made her angry. She was sorry to have troubled Mrs. Dunlap, but she could do nothing else. She was not to be patronized; no, never again, and this must be made apparent to Mr. Beaton. She would like to meet him again and define

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her position for him, and she must try to show kind Mrs. Dunlap that she had not been really angry.

At the noon recess, when the children had gone to their dinners, and she was making ready to do the same thing, she saw Ned Beaton again dismounting at the gate. She waited a little for him to go into the house, but instead, he came straight toward the school-room.

"How do you do once more?" he said, putting his hat and whip down on the nearest table and coming to shake hands with her. "I am going to the city, and I wanted to see again the size of this room for rug purposes."

Jane had shaken hands with him; she could not help it; and now the only thing she could find to say was: "You are very kind."

"To myself, yes," taking measuring strides across the floor. "If you should take cold, or the school be broken up with influenza, I'd have Tena back on my hands. As to the color," wheeling round and smiling cheerfully, "you will do me a great kindness to select that."

"Perhaps it would be better to let Mrs. Dunlap select it; she would know what will stand children's feet better than I."

"Perhaps; and now for the same influenza reasons, I will count the windows for weather-strips."

"I will go and call Mrs. Dunlap."

"One moment; I know that Mrs. Dunlap has no books, and I shall be so glad if you will go to my house and take what books you like. Don't thank me; it is all from the same motive of keeping you here; of mak-

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ing you contented. I seem to feel some sense of duty to Tena, and having you here seems to pay it."

The dying fire of Jane's indignation blazed up again at this. "Tena is a very sensitive little child," she said, crisply, "and needs more than duty."

"Yes; more's the pity," was answered quietly from where he measured a window. "Women, many of them, are made quite wrong for what life gives them. They should have sound digestions and be stupid; then, according to Carlyle, they could accomplish what they are obliged to do—'front much.' And I hope that you will educate Tena along practical lines. Persuade her that a woman need only to be sweet-tempered and handsome; teach her to hold herself properly; to walk well, and to be absolutely obedient to any man to whom she may belong."

"Why do you not take her to Turkey?" Jane flashed.

Beaton turned, smiling at her over his shoulder. "It would not be bad," he said. "As to the rug, on general principles I suppose that red will do, and we need not trouble Mrs. Dunlap. I shall send her the key of the library; and let me tell you, she is a nice woman, but married down. A good man, but by no means her equal."

Jane was looking at him, was receiving a new impression of him.

"It seems to surprise you," he went on; "you must remember how environment marks us. She was born in our class of life. Good-by; don't worry if I furnish the school-room." And again he went away whipping his boot.

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"Our class of life," Jane repeated; then he had not meant to patronize her. She had been silly; she was always being silly; and she wondered if he had observed it. Very slowly she took her way into the house, and very carefully she told Mrs. Dunlap all that had been said concerning the furnishing and the books, quite as if it had been a message, which impression was confirmed in Mrs. Dunlap's mind when, before school was over, a negro rode up, bringing her the key of the library, and a note, saying that she and Miss Ormonde could bring home a cart-load of books, if they liked; and on the servant's informing them that Mr. Beaton had gone away, Mrs. Dunlap agreed to go that very afternoon.

Never in her life had Jane been free in a library. Mrs. Saunders declared that books made much dust; Mr. Saunders had his club, and the room that was called the library was one of the handsome suite which was always on exhibition. There were some low shelves and some standard editions there, but absolutely stereotyped. Jane had read earnestly at odd times, but, of course, miscellaneously; now she found herself as eager as a hungry child before a pastry-cook's window. The children were dressed in their best and Mrs. Dunlap had put on her Sunday bonnet; and to Jane's surprise she seemed somewhat excited.

"I am glad to come to the old house once more," she said; "I've not been here since I was a girl. There's only a sort of housekeeper here now, and of course I could not come to see her. Ned Beaton brought her here when he brought Tena; she keeps the house, waits

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on him when he is here, and takes care of Tena all the time. She never goes anywhere, and we may not see her; but she may see us, and that kind of person always judges by clothes, you know. My mother used to know the ladies well. Poor Ned," she went on, "he has not had half a chance; his mother was the young second wife of an old man with two old-maid daughters. The mother died when Ned was born, and the old man soon after. As soon as they could, the sisters sent Ned to school, then to college, and from there he took himself off to travel. The old sisters died, and Ned came home to find himself very poor indeed. He tried to plant, but he knew nothing about it, and was actually measuring off certain land to sell, when he found a very superior grade of coal on it. That was four years ago; now he is building a town over at his mines, and is making money hand over fist. We'd never heard of any marriage or anything of that kind till he brought Tena home last September, and now we don't know anything about it; and some of the mothers did not know about joining in to have the school, if she was to come; and we don't like the children to be too much with her; she might teach them things. I notice she sticks close to you almost all the time, Miss Jane."

"Yes; and she is a nice little child."

"Ned's mother was a sweet woman," Mrs. Dunlap went on, "and her life was none too easy, I think, and I've not been in the house since before the ladies died. My, but they were prim! They never would enter any church but the Episcopal, but as sure as that was open, they'd come driving into town and walk up the aisle



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dressed in the same kind of clothes I remembered them wearing when I was a child. They were handsome ladies, and it was pitiful how soon they followed each other in death; and I've always thought that the burning down of the church with all the family memorials in it hurt them. We don't want the old name to die out, but we are awfully sorry that Ned's find of coal is going to ruin Stony Ridge. He's got a big company behind him, so there's money to do what he likes with, and the people in Stony Ridge won't wake up. Mr. Dunlap's forever talking to them about it, but they keep the same old stock in the shops from year to year till it almost falls to pieces. And over in Newtown they have a shop right now that beats anything we've ever had; and of course people go over there to buy. I don't think that Ned Beaton wants to ruin this town, but Mr. Dunlap says he's going to do it sure."

Jane had never heard Mr. Dunlap say a half-dozen sentences in the whole time that she had been in the Dunlap household; but from the numerous quotations made by Mrs. Dunlap, she supposed that they must frequently hold secret sessions; and she found herself wondering how the conversations opened. Idle speculations, that were interrupted by a sigh from her companion as they paused in front of the Beaton gate.

"Yes, I'm glad to come to this old house once more," she said; "very glad."

"It is a pretty place." And Jane looked about her almost as she had done on the first occasion of her entering. "It looks like a home."

"Well, it isn't. I suppose we must come in at the

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front door. Ah! there's Tena. So, Tena, we've come over to look at your father's books. Will you let us in? See? I have the key to the library; he sent it to me. Yes, I know the old hall well."

Jane looked about her curiously. She did not remember the outside of her home, but certain things within had made strong pictures in her memory—the nursery, the dining-room, and the breakfast-table, with the sunshine coming in and touching the corner of the end where her mother always sat, and from the white table-cloth, and from the old silver a cheerful whiteness had seemed to be reflected all about the room and on her mother's face, and beyond, there had seemed always a big fire; and the library that had seemed all books. And behind each of these memories there were big windows, making frames for swaying trees and long swaths of gray moss. These pictures came up to her now as she entered the hall that seemed familiar; very broad and going straight through the house, with a stairway at the far end that turned half way up; and the banisters were little and round. Perhaps all Southern houses of the same period were built after the same pattern. The very smell of the library as the door opened, the bookish, leathery smell, seemed to bring again forgotten things. A feeling of free delight took possession of her, as if she were getting back into some element that was natural to her, and she touched the books softly in friendly fashion. Any or all of them were hers for the nonce; she could rummage and read at her own pleasure, and she seemed suddenly to become possessed of a greedy desire for knowledge; she

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felt as if in not being a student she had missed her vocation; and she need not dread the winter any longer.

The Dunlap children, with Tena, had followed her in and now stood looking about them open-mouthed.

"We used to have books, too," Mrs. Dunlap said meditatively, "but my mother had to sell them; we'd better have kept them, they brought so little." And she walked about slowly, picking up one book after another. Presently she went out into the hall, the children following, and Tena, who seemed to feel her position as hostess. Left alone, Jane wandered from shelf to shelf, taking out a book here and there and putting them back with ever slower and slower motions. She was so ignorant outside of a certain beaten track that she did not know what to select, and felt her pleasure ebbing away. It was humiliating; it would be best for her to go back to Laurence Creswick's advice and read history.

She turned to the study table for the first time, observing it closely. All the fittings were of the old-fashioned, simple kind, and everything in profusion; everything in easy reach; a sort of impatient, careless order pervading all, and every sign of recent occupation. She wanted a pencil; there were all kinds, and paper in great piles. She had been accustomed to wealth; to the best things; but not to this, that she was sure Mrs. Saunders had meant when she used to speak of barbaric Southern profusion. This was surely what she had meant, and if Jane liked it for nothing else, she liked it for the reason that Mrs. Saunders had not liked it. She said to herself that there seemed to

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be more freedom in this sort of thing; and instead of taking a piece of paper just large enough, as Mrs. Saunders had trained her to do, she took a whole sheet to make her little list, and in the same spirit wrote it very large, dating it and signing it and leaving it in a conspicuous place. Yes, she liked the look of the profusion, the feeling, and she nodded to it as she gathered up the books she had selected.

Outside she found Mrs. Dunlap seated on the piazza talking to Tena, while her own children were playing in the old garden. Knowing her motive in keeping the child with her, Jane felt a little irritation; it seemed to strike in the face the generous freedom which Ned Beaton's study table had shown, and she took the child's hand. "You have a dear old home, Tena," she said, "and such a lot of books. I'll have to teach you very fast so that you can enjoy them."

The child's face lighted up. "He lent me one the other day, full of pictures."

"Your father?" Mrs. Dunlap questioned.

The child nodded, looking at her questioner as if some instinct told her all that Mrs. Dunlap felt toward her.

Jane drew her nearer still. "You must bring it to the school," she said, "and I will read it to you." Then they walked away, Mrs. Dunlap observing everything about her slowly, reminiscently, and Jane glancing back to where Tena looked so small standing in the big doorway.

The walk home was rather silent, for each child having relieved Jane of a book, seemed to feel the respon-

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sibility, and walked quietly, while Mrs. Dunlap seemed to have lost the power of speech. She had stepped back into her own place for a moment, Jane thought, remembering Ned Beaton's speech that Mrs. Dunlap had married down, and remembering, also, the speech that they had sold all their books; she had stepped back, and she is sorry, and the thought received confirmation from the way in which Mrs. Dunlap looked about her and the sigh that she drew as she entered her own house. Later, Jane saw her standing close beside her husband, on whose kindly, stolid face there was a queer look. They were not a demonstrative couple.

## XX

“We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on ; and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.”

NED BEATON, through his library, had given Jane a way of escape from Mrs. Saunders and her world, and she had availed herself of it. Laurence Creswick, too, had sent her advice and some carefully selected books, adding that, having secured a teacher's discount for her, there was still some money to her credit, which he would invest later on. Every day the school ; every afternoon, in fair weather, a walk with the children ; every evening a big fire and a pile of books, and time melted away.

After the first visit to the library, the rug for the school-room made the next date ; then some wall-maps made a stir in the little circle, and the children began to look on Tena differently. A large blackboard and some weather-strips completed her elevation among the children, while the parents began to speak of the school as an institution quite beyond anything that Stony Ridge had ever had ; and the people who had spoken of it lightly, began now to say openly that if the Episcopalians could have such a fine school, it was a pity that they could not rebuild their burned church and call a clergyman ; but under no circumstances, not

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even if they were Episcopalians, would they be beholden to such a worldling as Ned Beaton. Nor could they understand the Tomkins, who were good Methodists, being caught in such company.

The school went on, however, and the luxuries, coming one after another, with notes to Mrs. Dunlap, she began, like Tena, to attain to an elevation. She bought the best note-paper which the town afforded, for the purpose of answering these notes, letting them run into gossipy letters, as the mere fact of writing brought back to her an aroma from her earlier life and station. Occasionally she would bring home a book for herself, and began to assume a more protective air toward Jane, with a little mystery attached to it, as if she were mothering some hidden scheme; an air that puzzled Jane when she thought of it. One wet day, however, after the weather-strips arrived and had been found by the carpenter to be greatly in excess of the needs of the school-room, Jane, passing through the hall noiselessly, because of her overshoes, heard Mrs. Dunlap saying to her husband, "I'll put them in Miss Jane's windows; there's where he'd rather have them." She had reached the top of the stairs before she realized the trend of the words, and it was not until the carpenter and Mrs. Dunlap, with the remaining weather-strips, knocked for entrance that she understood completely Mrs. Dunlap's view of things.

"These were left over from the school-room, Miss Jane, and I thought I'd make you comfortable."

"I am comfortable," Jane said, quickly, "and do not care for the strips."

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"But you don't know how cold it will get."

"I am from the North, you know," her mind fleeting back to the almost tropic heat of her cousin's house, "and do not mind cold. Why not put them in the dining-room?"

Mrs. Dunlap looked crestfallen. "We are so anxious to keep you," she said, simply; "and I know Ned Beaton would be glad to have your windows made tight too."

"You and Mr. Beaton are both very kind." And Jane pushed up a window, as if to show how little she heeded the weather. The momentary fear that these people thought that what Ned Beaton was doing for the school-room was being done for her, had been exceedingly unpleasant; the suggestion that it arose from a fear that she would leave unless made comfortable, was quite another thing; but she could not persuade Mrs. Dunlap to use the strips anywhere else, and the next time that they went to the Beaton place the remaining strips were carried over carefully by Joey, and laid on the study table.

So with these little breaks, that took the proportions of decided excitements, Christmas was reached with its great expectations of joy, and its absolute certainty of melancholy. Jane had been entertained by each of her patrons in turn, and had gently made them understand that unless they looked on Christmas holiday as a necessity, she did not desire it. She feared even a thought of a break in the routine that was proving such a balm. Seven days to do with as she pleased; seven days barren of duties; seven empty days like seven eyeless



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ghosts—how awful! She must save herself; and she put it quite playfully that Christmas eve and day and New Year's day would be quite enough, she thought, and she was sure that the children were happier at school.

"And each one of you can bring your presents to the school," she said guilefully to the children; "and we'll have such fun!"

And so it was arranged, and she made careful provision that for each child there should be a surprise on his or her table; what was for her solace should not be for their discomfort. But in spite of the occupation she had provided for herself, the season brought its pain. Her father's letters had come as regularly as of yore, but there was in each one the same tone of reserve that there had been in the first; each letter had hurt her, but the Christmas letter brought a double wound, in that it brought a check. She did not dare return it, for the admonition accompanying it had been so stern. "You are an ever-present anxiety to us," he wrote, "so that you must allow me to ease my mind by arming you against one danger, at least." And the check was for a hundred dollars.

"And he is getting tired and old, and no one to help him yet," she said; and for the moment she felt that it would have been better to have stayed with Mrs. Saunders, and have borne anything. Her mother's letter put it a little differently. "We send our Christmas present together, dear child, and you must accept it, in order to set our minds at rest." Then, as if to show her why it was that they could not understand, why it

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was that they were troubled about her, the mother enclosed the latest letter from Marion, filled with balls and operas, plays, receptions, dresses, and jewels, speaking here and there of Mark Witting as if he were an intimate visitor, and at the last a casual mention of Laurence Creswick having come to town for the winter, and that she liked him so much. Descriptions that at home had made Emily, and Ann, and Polly almost weep with desire, and that up in Stony Ridge revealed things to Jane.

The other trial was a letter from Mr. Saunders. Regularly each week Jane had written to him to the club, but never until now had she received a line; and now, like her father's letter, it also contained a check that she could not return. "If you had only whispered 'I am not happy,' I would have taken you home," he wrote; "not that I am blaming you; it was all my fault. I loved you, my child, and I was weak about disturbing anything, that was all. I should have watched more carefully, have acted more decidedly; but through all you were a patient, gentle, too gentle, and loyal child. Make me happier by keeping the enclosed, so that I shall know that you are not in want. I have never been able to write to your father, because I feel that I have betrayed my trust. God bless you."

A note from Mrs. Saunders enclosed a smaller check, but this was no problem. Jane's heart was so sore, her position seemed to be so unnecessarily bitter and so entirely due to Mrs. Saunders, that her measures with her were sharp and swift. She wrote "Cancelled" across the face of the check; she had heard

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her Cousin Henry tell of doing that, and enclosed it in an empty envelope ; then she re-read Mrs. Saunders's note, full of cooings for the " Holy Season, and Peace and Good Will, and God's best blessing that had been granted her in dearest Marion." And as she went swiftly down to the post-office, a little feeling against her sister began to rise in her heart.

It was not a happy time, though everyone tried to make the stranger welcome and at home, and Jane did her part also ; and on the clear, cold afternoon of Christmas-day she took the children out to walk, in order to relieve Mrs. Dunlap, who was weary with the unusual amount of supervision required by the cook because of the unusual amount and variety of the dinner prepared. Jane was full of restless energy, drawn from many sources, and as reading was impossible, she suggested the walk, at which the children jumped eagerly.

The sky was clear, the air was like wine, and the sun would set red. The bare trees stood up like etchings where they were few, and in purple masses where they were many. The fields were brown and empty, the ruts along the road were frozen hard, the rain-pools had each its little film of ice. Nothing was stirring. The town was all by the fire after the heavy dinners, save where, far away, a few stray fire-crackers were being set off. Joey sent some longing looks in that direction as Jane turned to the road up the hill, but as he himself had a pack in one pocket, and matches in another, he followed without demur.

To the children Jane seemed as she had been that first afternoon, when she had astonished them by pro-

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posing races. She proposed one now; but though the children started well, Christmas dinners such as they had disposed of were against success, and their pantings caused Jane to stop, and when they once more caught up, to suggest telling stories. This was more soothing, and they listened with patience at least. But Jane herself did not find this pastime suited to her mood; the stories dragged, seeming as overburdened as the children. She had made a mistake in bringing the children, and yet being alone was not what she desired. In honor of the day, she had foolishly put on the best street dress that she had brought, and which she had not worn since the winter before, and it gave her strange feelings in the empty country road. It belonged to other times and other regions, regions where Marion would now be resting before the dinner they were to have that night, the approaching glories of which she had described in the letter forwarded to Jane, and her dress of pure white, and the pearls she would wear. And Mark Witting would be there, and Laurence Creswick——

“And what did the princess do then?” Nannie asked, Jane’s voice having ceased.

“Why—of course—why she gave a great dinner; people always do on Christmas, you know, and asked all the young gentlemen who were bachelors and who lived by themselves in clubs——”

A low laugh broke the stillness through which Jane’s voice had sounded, and looking up she saw Ned Beaton leaning on his gate.

“What a charitable princess,” he said, coming out;

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"and may I wish you a Merry Christmas? Well, children, have you had a fine dinner? You look so."

"Plum-pudding," Joey said.

"Turkey," Mamie went on.

"We always have plum-pudding and turkey for Christmas," Nannie added, reprovingly.

"Lucky children; I haven't had any."

"If mother had known——" Nannie began.

"She would have sent for me? I am sure of that, and I will come next Christmas. May I send Joey to the house for Tena, Miss Ormonde, and may we go to walk, too? Run along, Joey, and we'll walk slowly. I'm afraid that you spoil your scholars, Miss Ormonde; Tena tells me such tales."

"I have given them no holiday."

"At which Tena seems to be delighted. I thought that I was the only child on earth who had ever preferred school to holiday, not because of scholarship, please, but because of companionship. But won't you continue the story of that beneficent being who sent out into the highways and hedges of clubdom and gathered in the poor bachelors for dinner?"

Jane laughed. "Probably you know more about that than I do."

"I do not seem to remember any such princess; but then, I've been a wanderer on the face of the earth, and only now with sufficient gilding to enable me to catch and reflect the lights of society. But what happened when the bachelors arrived? did one have on a wedding garment, and did he straightway fall down at the feet of the young woman whom the benign princess was chaperoning?"

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"Of course; and if he has gilding enough to reflect all the society lights, the young woman will say yes."

"Indeed? I had expected you to rebuke me."

"For the ways of the world?"

"And you put it in the present tense, if he has gilding?"

"She will say yes. To-night is Christmas, you see, and the dinner. I am telling one of the realistic stories of to-day. Princesses and titles are no longer strange, and gilding is absurdly common."

"So much so that you despise it."

Jane looked up quickly. "It might be more true to say that my contempt of it is a phase of sour grapes."

"And so you have come down into the great Southern wilderness to gather it."

"It seems so."

"Teaching a little country school at starvation prices."

"I had turkey and plum-pudding for dinner."

"But honestly, how do you stand it?" They were walking slowly, waiting for Joey and Tena, and Ned Beaton had lowered his voice. They were of the same world, and he wondered at her patience, and, as on closer inspection, he had not found her to be cross-eyed, nor with a broken nose, he was trying to find some reason for her presence in this lonely country road where they walked. She or her people must have lost their money suddenly, and she had taken up the first thing she had found to do, or she had been disowned or driven out in some way; something was quite out of order.

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"There is nothing in my life here that is hard to bear," Jane answered, quietly. "The children are good, and everyone is very kind to me."

"But the sameness, the dulness, the lack of all the delicacies of life, of all the finer touches, all the luxuries?"

"In the life that I left," Jane said, slowly, "there was nothing, and all the while I was pretending that it was something; for the rest, my digestion seems to be good and you have made the school-room quite luxurious."

"You are plucky."

Just here Tena came flying up the road, Joey following at a heavier pace. "Oh, Miss Jane!" she cried, and clasped her about the waist.

"Merry Christmas, Tena." And Jane, straightening up from a tighter embrace than the first, found Ned Beaton watching her with an amused smile.

"Run on, Tena," he said, "you and the children." He now could give the order, having one in the group. "Do you submit to that, or to ten such, every morning? You are more plucky even than I thought."

"Not quite ten, and not every day; but they are nice children, and I have an abiding sympathy for children."

"It seems to me that they have a pretty good time."

"Did you have?" looking directly at him.

"As good as I deserved, I fancy. You remember what Carlyle says about the estimate we make for ourselves of what we think we deserve? I took that to heart early in life, and never since then have I looked for anything but what I could get of myself. What

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we secure, that is ours and that we deserve; and I never expect anything more; no luck, no grace of tender mercy."

"It is a hard creed."

"Rub a spot to soreness, and Nature throws up a callosity."

"Does that insure against suffering?"

"To suffer is one of the most useless things in life," looking down into Jane's eyes and smiling. "Don't suffer; you can control it, you know. To quote once more: 'To those who think, life is a farce.'"

"'To those who think, life is a farce,'" Jane repeated, and looked away across the fields.

"Don't you see?" Beaton asked.

"Yes."

They had reached the top of the hill, and Jane stopped, looking out over the wide, rolling view. Nothing stirring, moving, not a sound, save some distant cow-bells. A film of smoke lay over the town, and all the yellow line of the clayey road could be clearly followed from far beyond, up to their very feet.

"I wonder the desolation does not kill you."

"If I cannot grasp anything else," Jane answered, "I do not deserve anything else. And I am just now told that such vagaries as suffering can be controlled."

Beaton laughed. "You ought to be a good teacher," he said, "you are such an apt scholar."

"Thank you. But seriously, you have done much for me in lending me your library."

"It is a pleasure, I assure you; but, by the way," they had turned and were walking down the hill, "I



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found some unusual things on my study table — weather-strips and lists of books; why?”

“Mrs. Dunlap put the strips there because they are yours; and I put the lists there, that you might know of the safety of your books.”

“What a lot of trouble, and what desperate honesty! Could no place be found for the weather-strips? I am quite sure that cyclones blow in around your windows, for instance, I seem to hear them rattling at this very moment.”

“I did not wish them.”

“Because at that time you were ignorant. If you go on sleeping in a tornado you’ll soon be having neuralgia, and be obliged to wear night-caps; fancy!”

Jane laughed. “Thank you for the mirth,” she said.

“Christmas makes you lonely? it does not me, because I have grown to like loneliness; though I must confess to being pleased this afternoon when I saw you and the children coming up the road. It amused me, too, to hear a person rolling in the wealth of fifteen dollars a month speaking about such poor things as princesses, and fashionable clubs, and idle bachelors waiting to be provided for. So I was rude enough to laugh; but I am continually wondering why Mrs. Fenser screwed you so. She must have done it simply from love of a bargain—the bargain habit—there are such creatures.”

“You forget the board and washing.”

“And the railway ticket. You must have been very ignorant of the worth of things to have taken it.”

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A sudden flash of pleasure had come to Jane at the mention of Mrs. Fenser and her methods; he had not tried to give her anything! How had she imagined it? and she looked up brightly. "I am only a woman, you know," she said; "and women don't make fortunes; they only make livings."

"If the world were in order, they would not have to make anything."

Jane laughed. "You got out of that beautifully," she said; "but really, you should have been a Turk; your ideas of my sex are wretched!" And she laid her hand on the gate that he did not seem inclined to open.

"Won't you come in?" Mrs. Dunlap called from where she had opened the front door.

"Not this evening, thank you," he answered, "but I am coming to dine with you next Christmas; Nannie has asked me." And taking Tena's hand, he went away.

## XXI

“The quarrel is a very pretty quarrel as it stands;  
We should only spoil it by trying to explain it.”

JANE'S knowledge had taken its seat beside her ignorance, and by comparison it looked very small. Her little knowledge announced that checks were not meant for keepsakes, and that it was better to deposit money than to keep it in an old stocking. Whereupon her big ignorance demanded, promptly, “How do you deposit money?”

Mrs. Saunders's business training had reached only to the point of keeping Jane well aware of how much Mrs. Saunders gave her, training that did not avail Jane at this crisis. She did not wish to ask the Dunlaps, for it did not seem wise to reveal her ignorance to people who would not understand. Ned Beaton would understand it perfectly, but she did not know when she would see him again. To reveal her stupidity to her father would be to make him more uneasy than ever; it would be the same thing with Mr. Saunders, so that her only resource seemed to be Laurence Creswick. He knew how wofully helpless she was in one or two directions at least, and it would not shock him very much to discover one or two, or even a dozen, further instances of her inability to do ordinary things without instruction.

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And he, receiving her letter late one snowy afternoon, read it in his luxuriously furnished rooms, and smiled happily. How naturally she was turning to him; how sweetly and simply she wrote, so sure of his interest, so confident of his faithfulness. Looking into the glowing depths of the fire, he could see so many visions of her—graceful, slender, fresh, and charming; always gentle, and always an appealing look in her eyes. He had never entirely understood her flight; he had never been entirely satisfied as to what it was that had driven her out into the world, although, of course, Mrs. Saunders and matrimony had to do with it. Ever since that day when he and Jane had walked together up in the hills and had discussed the quality of nobility; ever since Mrs. Saunders had catechized him on the afternoon of Mrs. Cumming's tea; ever since that night at the concert, when Jane had defied Mrs. Saunders; ever since then he had been studying Mrs. Saunders.

To him she was unfailingly kind and, to the best of her ability, charming; but charm she never so wisely, he never forgot the look on Jane's face as she had said to him that autumn day, that seemed generations ago: "Play school-master, and let me send to you for a reference," and though she had laughed, it had been a pitifully quavering little laugh, and her dear eyes had been full of tears. Yes, charmed she never so wisely, Jane looked at him always from somewhere behind Mrs. Saunders.

This second sister seemed to be devoted to her cousin, and the cousin to her, and she was a pretty

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creature, in a diminutive, childlike way, but she was not Jane. This one had a steely brightness, a butterfly lightness, a kittenish love for soft things, for the cream of material things. He liked her—it was more than like, he was becoming fond of her in a brotherly way. He smiled happily over this phrase, it pleased him. Eight sisters and brothers Marion said she had, and country life in the South was dull beyond comparison, and she had drawn her slender finger across her lovely throat, and had nodded in a bewitching way, saying: “Janey and her independent fad saved my life.”

Then Mrs. Saunders had sighed and added: “I had sent for you before I knew Janey’s plans, dear, so that Janey did not save your life.”

One day Mrs. Saunders had asked him, abruptly: “Are Jane’s letters to you cheerful?” And he could not be sure whether she was seeking knowledge concerning the correspondence or if she were really anxious as to the girl’s welfare. He had not been able to decide, but had answered according to Jane’s own instructions, that she was quite satisfied and also successful. Now he could inform her further, if he thought best, that Jane had so far advanced in prosperity as to open a bank account. He must answer the letter at once, however, before he dressed for dinner, so that she could put her money away safely. But think of a creature so ill-supplied with knowledge starting out to fight the world! It would do a boy good; a few hard knocks would put him in his place and teach him things; but a girl, a gentle, tender girl!

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It hurt him to think of it, and tempted him to go down and see for himself. She was so plucky, she'd never cry "enough!"—never; she'd smile to the very last. On the other hand, she was so honest she would never deceive, so that he must believe that so far she had been fortunate. He wondered a little bit about this man who seemed to be so busy furnishing the school-room; still, as his child was in the school, and he the rich man of the community, he was probably posing a little as general benefactor, and, of course, the child meant that there was a wife somewhere.

He sighed; if the girl would only write that she was sad or sorrowful, or give a hint of loneliness, he would go at once and persuade her into a life-long haven. Instead, she wrote of the books she was reading, and the big wood-fire, and the Beatons and their old place, and of Mrs. Dunlap's motherly kindness, giving no sign that she needed either help or comfort, or that she had any wish for any other haven than the one she had reached. He often wondered what Mr. Saunders thought of it all. He had changed a good deal of late, seemed depressed, and had become very silent. And Mark Witting seemed to be paying the same kind of attention to Marion that he had used to pay Jane, only perhaps a little more, and he wondered if it meant anything. In fact, everything was irritatingly like the winter before, only that Marion had been put into Jane's place.

With all these thoughts in his mind that night at the opera, one which brought Jane more forcibly than ever before him, he watched Marion, who was looking

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about in her quick, bird-like way, now and then nodding gayly, and always smiling. Jane would have been absorbed. At last he said to the girl: "Your sister was devoted to this opera."

"Was she? and think of her down in the corn-fields! She must be nearly dead."

"On the contrary, she seems to be quite cheerful."

"You hear regularly?" looking up quickly.

"No, but your sister is kind enough to answer my letters."

"Well, she does not write to me any more, nor to cousin."

"My dear Marion," Mrs. Saunders put in, gently, "Jane has not answered my last letter as yet, but that is all. You are giving Mr. Creswick a wrong impression of your sister. She communicated with us all most dutifully, she had been too well trained to neglect such things. I must confess, however, that I do not see how she endures her life, for she is not even on the coast, but up in the hill-country. Yet she seems cheerful, does she not, Mr. Creswick?"

"Very much so indeed, and successful into the bargain," he added, remembering Jane's charge.

"Successful in a country school?" and Marion shook her head. "It is such an odd fad."

"I agree to that," and Mrs. Saunders patted Marion's hand. "It is odd, but you must be careful, dear, not to give a wrong impression of your sister, for we, Mr. Creswick and I, have known her, and you have not, and we have loved her very much indeed."

"Have you?" and the girl looked up into Creswick's eyes archly.

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He nodded, smiling.

"And did Mr. Witting love her, too?" she persisted, turning to Mark.

Mrs. Saunders laughed softly. "Of course, dear, we all loved her; Jane was very charming."

"Did you?" Marion persisted, still looking at Mark.

"Absolutely," Mark answered, with a gravity in his tone that seemed strange to Creswick.

"Then why did she run away? Everybody loving her could not hold her?"

"Perhaps there was too much love," Mark suggested, "perhaps we were jealous, were ready to tear her to pieces among us, causing her to decide that discretion is the better part of valor."

"Well, I wish she had stayed," Marion went on, a little impatiently, "I would have liked to see all the perfection I am hearing so much about. Even the servants tell me of her, and as for the old ladies who come to see cousin"—looking appealingly at Creswick—"they sing her praises continually, and I'm always feeling that they are drawing comparisons in her favor. It is trying."

"You are so different, dear," Mrs. Saunders said, smoothly, "that no comparison can be drawn."

"Very true," and Creswick nodded again to the spoiled child, "you are absolutely different." Then Marion's words caused him to wonder suddenly if Jane had known of her sister's coming; surely she would have mentioned it, and he asked, abruptly: "Did Miss Ormonde know that her sister was coming to you this winter?"



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Mrs. Saunders shook her head sadly. "I was keeping it as a pleasant surprise for her——"

"Cousin telegraphed for me the very day that Janey left," Marion put in; "wasn't it queer?"

"Very queer," Mark answered.

"It was queer," Mrs. Saunders agreed. "The servant who took my telegram and letter to Mr. Ormonde to the office brought back Jane's note of farewell. It was very strange, and yet not too strange, for Janey, you remember, Mr. Creswick," turning suddenly to him, "had not looked well, nor had she seemed herself for some time; for all the time that you and she were reading together; from the middle of the summer, indeed; and my thought was to surprise her out of her lethargy. Our plans happened to climax on the same day, that was all. Poor Jane!"

Creswick had been wondering what Mark Witting's extreme gravity had meant, what had made him so earnest in answering Marion's half-bantering question, when Mrs. Saunders's announcement concerning Jane's lethargy called him back to the conversation. He had never associated Jane and lethargy, but all the rest of the story seemed to hang together, and he could only abuse fate that the respective plans, as Mrs. Saunders had called them, *had* climaxed on the same day, and so had taken Jane away. Jane had seemed a little different last summer, but he would not have called it lethargic. At all events she seemed now to have fully aroused herself, and he was still more sure of this when in February he received a letter from Jane which astonished him beyond measure. She was mak-

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ing up her mind to open a little shop, she announced, and wanted to know if he would kindly send her the addresses of some of the cheap places in New York, so that she could open negotiations.

"I am going to ask you not to mention this," she wrote, "because I do not mean to tell my people. A shop would seem a dreadful thing to my father and mother. I shall begin in a very small way, with a little sale of spring millinery, opening only in the afternoon when school hours are over. When the holidays come I shall decide finally between business and teaching. Business will mean a general shop—the groceries about which you scoffed. Don't bother about anything but the addresses, please."

This was the result of the bank account, Creswick pondered, and the more that she succeeded in business the less hope there would be for him. More and more it was coming home to him that the girl had been in earnest, deadly earnest, that day on the hill. It had not been a sudden decision at all, even though it had seemed to culminate suddenly; and how definitely she had gone to work; how steadily she had pursued her aim, and there was no sign as yet of halting or wavering. He must, of course, make all possible inquiries, instruct her in wholesale methods, and select the hats and bonnets, if need be. Even in the midst of the sensation of blankness that had come over him he laughed at the thought of himself as a buyer, and in this spirit he answered Jane's letter. "Just as soon as you are fully established in business," he wrote, "I shall learn the persuasive ways of the

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seller and offer you my services as travelling salesman. If only I could be stricken with poverty, I'd follow, be fired by your example. As a beginning of poverty, by the way, why not let me invest some capital in your speculation—send down a car-load of bonnets, and lard, and nails?"

"How good he is," Jane said to the damp February wind as she read his letter going up the stony street from the post-office. She looked about her at the uncouth picture which yet had a certain friendliness. The scattered, irregular houses, the shabby fences, the ragged trees, the very stones of the road had come to be associated with all the acute sensations of her present life, for here it was that she read her letters, and looking up from a wound or a sting, the insensate things about her would by comparison seem friendly. Often in the months that had passed she had felt herself to be truly the pilgrim and stranger she had called herself. Watching people hurrying home out of the cold; catching momentary glimpses of fire-lighted interiors as doors were opened and shut; seeing, through forgotten windows, little happy pictures, she had felt herself cruelly alone. But now that she was meditating a change, a venture that would identify her with the place, that would in a certain way bridge over her isolation, she was afraid. Indeed she stood between two fears. So far in life people had hurt her, and she dreaded coming near enough again to be stricken, to be made uncertain as to pain; on the other hand, a certain pain stared her in the face. She had been asked casually if she would go home

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for the summer holidays. Instantly a great dread had loomed up which had hidden from sight all minor considerations. Suppose her father should call her home, she would have no excuse. Go home?—she could not, not now, and through Marion's letters be in touch with all that she was trying to put away? not now, not yet, it would be death by slow torture. Go home a burden, and hear forever Mrs. Saunders's low laugh? Never. Some barrier must be raised against that possibility, and the corner-stone of the barrier was laid by Mrs. Dunlap, who had one day said, tentatively: "You know all about New York, Miss Jane, couldn't you tell me how to get a bonnet cheaper than the prices they send out, and better looking than what they bring here or to Newtown?" And Jane, saying that she would think of it, and stumbling over this other fear of going home, grasped the idea of spring millinery as the protection she was in search of.

She had put her Christmas checks into the county bank, and had added something from her monthly salary, and when all was counted it was a small sum, still it was enough for this venture, and if she failed and lost it all it still would have served its purpose in keeping her in Stony Ridge all summer, and perhaps a further purpose would be served in that the worry of it would possibly put an end to introspection. Success or failure, however, would not be such a great matter, for there would be the school again in the autumn, and in a day or two she opened her plan to Mrs. Dunlap.

"If I could hire a room," she said, "and have a

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few things, bonnets and trimmings, for sale in the afternoons; and, when school is over for the summer, make it into a small shop, do you think that I could make it pay? I could also give embroidery lessons."

Mrs. Dunlap's eyes had opened wide, and she had offered all the objections she could think of, Jane answering them one by one, agreeing to anything, even to teaching the Dunlap children and Tena down in the shop when the holidays were over if the shop should prove itself a success; then having done her duty, Mrs. Dunlap gave herself up to visions. Here was an opportunity to have a decent shop in the town, and to keep people's money at home; a chance to look less countrified — why not? In her stunted career her vision had been limited to home-made clothes, or to the heart-rending productions of the Stony Ridge dressmaker, who also built up strange things for the head, so that Jane and Jane's clothes had been a revelation, and she had realized at once the great gulf fixed between Jane's apparel and any other that she had ever seen, and had been filled with longing.

All these thoughts came back to her now, and dazzled her. "There is a room down-town," she said, slowly.

"On the main street, with a big window," Jane broke in; "yes, and it's empty?"

"Yes, Miss Rogers had a store there; yes, and failed; but I'll find out about that room for you." Then Jane, in spite of the fact that Miss Rogers had failed, had written at once to Laurence Creswick, and his answer coming more quickly than she had thought

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possible, filled her with excited doubts as she walked through the misty February morning.

Wholesale, of course, that was the way to buy; send him a memorandum of what she wanted, and of the amount she wished to invest, and he and the shopman would do the rest! "How good he is!" and she quickened her step. She must arrange about the room at once; have it cleaned, and a sign. Her heart quailed—Ormonde on a sign! She had no right to put it there; it belonged to her brothers, and her step slackened. She had no middle name; why not "Miss Jane"? Milliners were usually Maries, or something of the kind; why not Miss Jane? Good, she would speak to Mrs. Dunlap that very afternoon.

She whirled the children through the school hours, scarcely understanding why she did it. She had found the barrier she had longed for, but why any excitement? A change other than the laundress—was that it? Another venture, almost as new and strange as her running away—that running away, the wisdom of which was still hanging in the balance. But as she talked with Mrs. Dunlap that afternoon her excitement increased, and her listener was deeply affected by her energy and enthusiasm. A friend, not a common buyer, would select the things—a New York person who knew! And Mrs. Dunlap had renewed visions of herself as transfigured in fashionable attire.

"But we down here can't buy expensive things," she said at last, with a regretful fall in her voice.

"That is just what I want to know," Jane answered, promptly; "prices, and how many bonnets, how many

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hats, trimmed and untrimmed, I had better send for?"

"All married women used to wear bonnets," Mrs. Dunlap began, literally, "but lately some of them have taken to hats. I don't think it looks well, myself; but you can count on all your school mothers to buy bonnets—that'll be four; and as to prices, well, I have given as much as five dollars."

"Yes."

"But if you could put them at less, even a little less—you see, four dollars and ninety-five cents seems so much cheaper."

"Yes."

"And I think," she went on, "that you can order six bonnets trimmed, and as many untrimmed, because once we mothers put on New York bonnets the others will find reason why they must do it, too. They'll talk about us first, though. They have talked about the school, you know."

"No, I did not know."

"Well, they have; all the same they'd like to be in it. My idea is that they'll come into the shop because they can't get into the school."

"And how many hats?"

"You can get a good many hats. Can't you get some patterns and trim them yourself? Then you can let the price down a bit. People have to give their work and time when they are beginning. But I don't think you'll lose, and I am just as anxious as you are. Just as soon as you hear that the things are on the way, we'll go down and hire the room and clean

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it up; we'll take Jake down some Saturday to scour, and you'd better put a notice in the paper—let it be in for next week, for the paper only comes out once a week—and I'll go round and tell the mothers."

Things were rushing faster than Jane had dreamed, and she felt as if caught in a current that was hurrying her on to some unknown thing, just as she had felt in the autumn after Mrs. Fenser had answered her advertisement. Never mind how much she thought of things and prepared for results, the crises in her life seemed always at the last to spring on her in a moment, and unawares, and before she realized having stepped over any bounds, a wall would be built up so that there was no turning back. Of course she was at liberty to change her mind; she could write to Laurence Creswick without difficulty, and could speak to Mrs. Dunlap, of course, and she could go home? She would engage the room at once and pay the rent for six months in advance. She would send the money and lists to Laurence Creswick; she would take one of her hats to pieces and learn, bow by bow, and flower by flower, how to trim it; she would study with care the different styles of head-gear to be seen in church and in the streets, and she would advertise in the weekly paper. She would succeed or she would fail; she would die, but she would not go home.



## XXII

“ We wear out life, alas !  
Distracted as a homeless wind,  
In beating where we must not pass,  
In seeking what we shall not find.”

**I**N a few days a little buzz began to reach Jane through the school children. “ Are you really going to have a shop, Miss Jane?” and “ Mamma says she’ll buy me a hat.” Then a letter from Creswick to say that the things had left New York. He made his part to seem very easy and very amusing, giving his views of bonnets in general, and of bonnets for a village community; of hats for country girls; of the flowers, and ribbons, and wires, and much other cheerful nonsense that made Jane laugh. “ And I will keep you informed of the state of the market,” he went on; “ and be sure to let me know when you want the lard and nails. This has been the funniest thing of my life, and I envy you.”

All of Saturday morning Jane spent in the future shop, an unlovely place at best, but it was clean, and perhaps it would not look as dismal to Stony Ridge as it did to her. Across the window she had tacked a strip of cloth on which was printed, in large letters :

MISS JANE  
HAS FOR SALE A FEW  
HATS AND BONNETS FROM NEW YORK

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which Mrs. Dunlap declared to be "fine," as the "few" would make the women anxious lest they'd not get there in time to buy; then behind the sign Mrs. Dunlap had tacked a white cotton curtain to keep out curious gazers. Jane had bought a table, a sofa, a few chairs, and a dressing-table with the least gnarled mirror that the stock of furniture in the town afforded. She would bring down her own pin-cushion and hand-glass. The things would arrive on Monday, probably, and she would be ready for inspection by Tuesday afternoon, and it was with something of a thrill that she locked the door on her preparations and took her way up the hilly street.

Half-way up she met Ned Beaton on horseback. He dismounted, and, slipping the bridle over his arm, joined her. "I hear that you are going into business," he began at once; "why did not you consult me?"

"It did not occur to me."

"Will you tell me about it; why you are going to do it, and what you expect the end to be?"

"I expect the end to be a fortune."

"It is a speculation, then."

"Yes."

"And you can afford to lose what you put into it?"

"You are not encouraging."

"I am not sure that I wish to be."

"You told me once, in a very instructive way, Mr. Beaton, that we could have only the thing that we could grasp; I am trying to grasp something."

"In Stony Ridge?"

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"Women cannot afford to despise the day of small things."

"Thanks to men; but will you walk a little slower, please, and let me talk to you seriously?"

Jane slackened her pace.

"I do not know you very well," he began, "but I feel driven into admonishing you, into pleading with you. You are throwing away your money and yourself in going into a shop; believe me, it is a hopeless venture."

"Do you mean for me especially, or because Stony Ridge is a hopeless place?"

"Both."

"You think that I am incapable?"

"Not at all, but I have had need to give women a great deal of thought, and I have arrived at the point where I am sorry for them, and more sorry for them now than ever before."

Jane looked up quickly. "You mean——"

"That they are deceived, that you are deceived by a very plausible seeming. The great cry now is that everything is open to women, and the poor things believe it. There are colleges and the like, but what then? After you are educated, after you have passed all the examinations, you are women still—you *will* fall in love."

The color sprang into Jane's face and her eyes flashed.

"Don't be angry," lifting his hand deprecatingly, "it is this one lovely weakness that at present saves the situation; but putting that aside for a moment,

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and granting mental equality, granting educational equality, men *will* have more faith in a man's strength, in a man's judgment, in a man's nerves. Will a man, then, ever send for a woman physician or entrust anyone he loves to the care of one? Will he ever employ a woman lawyer, be she never so charming a Portia? Would we employ women clerks if it were not that they will accept lower wages?"

Again Jane's eyes seemed to catch fire. "I hate men," she said.

"You are quite right," and Beaton nodded, "we are hateful creatures, and I for one think it greatly our fault that women stand where they stand to-day. If we men had never been unjust to you women, had never neglected you, had treated you properly, you would all have been beautiful; beautiful women are always cared for; so it follows that you would never have tried to stand alone, and the way that leads to nowhere would never have been open to delude you into work that leads to nothing. Believe me, I have thought this thing out as carefully as a man can, and I have come to the conclusion that it is the plain women who stand first in this movement, who have been driven to work for solace."

"Thank you," and Jane laughed. "Work for solace is good."

"But not for you; your working contravenes my theories. Besides, there is no use in your taking this stand, for, leaving everything else to one side, you will never get anywhere."

"We cannot be sure of that."

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"We can. In the first place, you have no future in a town like this; in the second place, women are not meant to go into business; I have not seen any of them succeed in business for themselves. I mean business as business, not trimming hats and making unholy charges for clothes, but an honest business for honest gains. They can't do this alone, and if you will look around you you will realize that no woman is ever allowed to work up to the head of any institution or company where there are men. Never mind how clever, how apt, how facile you are, we can never promote you, for one simple reason, that there is always the chance that just as soon as you are thoroughly trained and absolutely necessary, you will marry, and we'd have to begin all over again on another candidate."

They walked along in silence for a few steps, then Jane said: "But if one should pledge one's self not to?"

"Then you'd help only the one woman who pledged herself, for that woman does not marry and so does not hand on her business ability, see? While in man it is reduced to heredity."

"I have never thought of working for my sex as a sex," Jane answered, slowly, as if a new idea had come to her, "but you are rapidly driving me into that position."

"God forbid!"

"You speak of us almost as goods and chattels; certainly as nonentities."

"As the solace of life—as exquisite flowers."

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"And when the flowers are withered?"

"To be gazed on with loving melancholy, as we gaze on the pressed flowers in our Bibles that recall a charming spring or a gorgeous summer; to be shielded sacredly."

"When you began I thought you in earnest."

"I am in earnest; your going into business is absurd."

"Why may not I, individually, succeed?"

"Because, putting other things aside, you do not strike me as being in the least fitted for business. You are sensitive, you are not accustomed to fighting the world. There are strong lines in your face, but they are not there naturally, they have been put there by an unkind fate. When your face relaxes it is as soft and gentle as a child's; when your eyes are not consciously on the defensive, they are pathetically appealing. Pray forgive this extremely personal criticism, but from the very first you excited my curiosity and interest. I picked up an envelope addressed to you. I watched you walking away from me up a long road reading something intently. From your general appearance I thought that you had strayed to this place by mistake; then I reflected that you might be cross-eyed or noseless."

Again Jane looked up at him, laughing.

"Yes, and I put the envelope on the gate-post to wait for you."

"You would do that much for a noseless woman?"

"I'd do more, I'd put her into a convent and support her there. Then I saw you, talked to you, and ever since I've been drawing conclusions about you."

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"You are very kind."

"My dear Miss Ormonde, missionaries have to put up with a great deal more than sarcasm, and just now I look on myself as a missionary. I have been most horribly personal this afternoon, but I felt it necessary, even if you never speak to me again; but I am sure that you will forgive me, and will think of what I have said."

"Forgive you, of course, but turn back, no. I am going to succeed, let it cost what it may."

"Even after the brick wall is pointed out to you you insist on smashing your head against it?"

"Perhaps on climbing it. The modern woman you so much deprecate is athletic. Your mistake, Mr. Beaton, is that you have thought of me as a faddist; as trying to prove something for my sex; as leading an attack on your sex. I am not, I am working solely and simply for Jane Ormonde, and to make her a success, an ambition so small that it will be satisfied by money enough to make me independent."

"That is more practical, more man-like than your sex usually is, Miss Ormonde, and yet you allowed Mrs. Fenser to screw you, and sent back to me scornfully your rightful travelling expenses?" They had reached Mrs. Dunlap's gate, and, letting her through, Beaton leaned one elbow on top. "When do you open shop?"

"On Tuesday afternoon, I hope."

"Do you know that there is a prejudice against you in the town because you teach a select school?"

"I have heard so."

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"And a great one against the school because I enabled the mothers to have it. Do you know that because I did not invite the town to my wedding, and, failing that, did not frame my marriage license and hang it up in the post-office, that I am looked on as a very sooty sheep indeed? And have you reflected that these prejudices may hurt your trade?"

"Not if the bonnets are becoming. Curiosity will bring them in——"

"And vanity do the rest? Perhaps for a little while; but I am sorry that I did not know of this sooner," his voice losing its bantering tone. "I thought of you as in safe keeping until the middle of June at least, and then I was going to suggest that you become a travelling governess for the summer; give Tena and Nannie a peripatetic education. But what about the school next autumn?"

"According to you I shall have failed by that time, and can reopen the school; if not, the Dunlap children and Tena can come to me at the shop."

"A wilful woman——"

"Is like a man convinced against his will," and Jane held out her hand over the gate. "Thank you very much for all your advice," she said, "but I still hope that I shall not meet shipwreck."

"And I must leave you to wilful ruin?"

"I am afraid so." Then he mounted and rode away slowly.

On Monday all was excitement. At recess Jane went over to the station to receive her boxes, leaving the key of her shop with the drayman of the town so



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that he could put the boxes into the shop, the key then to be deposited with the grocer next door. Her dinner was late, of course, and with Mrs. Dunlap only.

"I'm so excited that I wish you'd give holiday," Mrs. Dunlap began; "I am fairly wild to see the things, and Mrs. Tomkins says she'll be there to-morrow, sure. I believe in my soul that being open so little will make people more anxious to come. A thing that you can do any time, you never find time to do, that's the way I am, anyhow; if my work didn't put me into a corner I'm afraid it would be badly shirked. Well, we'll go down at four, then."

Mrs. Dunlap had some forcible expressions, put her simple views of life into telling words, and sent Jane back to her teaching feeling that circumstances had in a way put her into a corner. She remembered, too, Ned Beaton's words: "And let Mrs. Fenser screw you?" No one should screw her again. Then Laurence Creswick had written, "Remember that your stock will keep; don't get into a panic and give it away." People looked on her as very weak; the lines of strength on her face had come by accident. She would show them differently, and begin by not being excited. She must price the things according to the bills, and do it carefully so as to pay the freight as well; then suddenly the rent rose up before her. In order not to lose she must pay rent as well as freight. Well might Mrs. Dunlap say that her work and time would have to be thrown in.

It was a sunshiny afternoon, and Mr. Dunlap agreeing to take the children with him to the farm so as to

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leave Mrs. Dunlap free, Jane and Mrs. Dunlap, armed with the bills, a hatchet, and several finishing touches thought necessary to make the barren place attractive, started off for the shop.

"My!" Mrs. Dunlap said, laughing a little breathlessly as she kept step with Jane, "I haven't been in such a stir since I was married. I'm fairly wild with curiosity, and I'll bet you that if the Tomkins children have told their mother she won't wait for to-morrow, she'll come right down."

Jane, who was almost having an ague over the possibilities of Laurence Creswick's taste in cheap bonnets, and who had been comforting herself with the thought that if they were too terrible she would have a little time in which to pull and pinch them into shape before the public had an opportunity to scorn them, was appalled by this suggestion. She had been foolish to impress it so carefully on Laurence Creswick that it was a country village, and that country village taste must be pandered to. Of course his ideas of country taste would be exaggerated. She had been very foolish, so now she asked: "Can't we lock the door and pretend not to be in?"

"Never," Mrs. Dunlap answered, promptly, "she will hear us hammering."

"And Mrs. Wheeler and Mrs. Miller, too?" Jane went on.

"No, they are quieter, they'll wait. But what are you afraid of? You ought to want customers to come as soon as possible."

Jane drew a sharp breath. "I am not afraid," she

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answered, mendaciously, "it is only that things will show to so much better advantage if they are properly arranged." She should have come alone. She opened the door almost like a thief, and closed it and locked it with hands trembling with excitement, then they turned to look at the boxes.

"My!" and Mrs. Dunlap walked around the boxes with the hatchet hanging down in her hand. Jane caught sight of her own face in the glass; she was stupidly pale, and with a set smile on her lips. She turned her back. "I will spread the table-cover first," she said, "and if you wish you can open the boxes," and she realized, almost with anguish, that all her determination not to be nervous had left her at the most critical moment, that she was filled with a longing such as she had felt when, as a child, she had been taken to the dentist—a longing for some hand to hold when the pain came. She had not had it then, and she did not have it now; there was no one to tell her fears to, and even to hint them would hurt her prospects.

The nails were screeching and groaning under the insinuating prizing of Mrs. Dunlap's hatchet, but the end was not yet, and Jane arranged and rearranged the pin-cushion and hand-glass that she had brought, until she could arrange them no more, and had to turn. Just then a part of a cover came up with a sharp crack, and a sea of tissue-paper was revealed.

"Wait a minute," Jane whispered, as if Mrs. Tomkins were already at the key-hole, "let us get this other piece off, and let us open the other box, too,

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before we unpack either; it will really be better, you know."

Of course Mrs. Dunlap agreed—just at that tensely exciting moment she would have agreed to almost anything; and when, after much awkward effort, both boxes were opened, and Jane gathered up the needlessly mutilated bits of board to put them away out of sight, giving herself one moment more of respite, Mrs. Dunlap called her back with cruel eagerness: "Come, come, Miss Jane; even the paper is beautiful!" and Jane had to return.

She was stupid. After all it was not a matter of life and death. It was well that she had steadied her nerves before she came on the first pyramid of straw and ribbon and waving roses. She felt her eyes grow big as saucers, she felt her lips part in a stiff smile. Mrs. Dunlap's eyes were as big as saucers, too, and a knock sounded on the door!

Without one word Mrs. Dunlap darted forward and unlocked it. "Just in time!" she cried, triumphantly; "such beautiful, beautiful bonnets!" and as Mrs. Tomkins came, with uplifted hands, Jane felt as if she had stepped from out a deadly nightmare.

It was plain sailing after this, Mrs. Tomkins working with as hearty a will as did Mrs. Dunlap, and before very long the boxes were emptied and the things arranged on the long table, indeed everything was done except the pricing, and that Jane would have to work out alone. Each lady selected a bonnet, however, engaging them regardless of cost, but kindly leaving them for the present in order to make the show more impressive for a day or two, then they

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went away, having home duties, and Jane was left alone in what seemed to her a chamber of horrors.

Fixing the prices was a tremendous job. She must add the rent and the freight to the cost of the stock, then hunt for her profit! Mrs. Dunlap's remark that four dollars and ninety-five cents seemed so much cheaper than five dollars was a valuable hint, indeed she found that four dollars and ninety-nine cents, even, seemed very much less than five dollars. It was a queer thing how magical these odd cents were, and shop-keeping promised to be infinitely more exciting than teaching. She had been a ridiculous coward, and that night she would write to Laurence Creswick and tell him how wonderfully he had succeeded, and how awfully ugly the things were. That he must think of her as meeting these terrible constructions daily, and as having to build others like them, and on Sunday she would have to look at these monstrosities in lumps, and that having had the opportunity to better the taste of the town, she had not done it. That this last consideration had made her feel really immoral, but that she had decided that the hats of the young girls and the children should be trimmed with extreme simplicity as a measure of saving grace.

She was very tired when she locked the shop-door behind her, but she was conscious also of a great sense of relief. She had made the plunge, and would be able to tell Ned Beaton that she was on the high road to success. And that night she went to bed to dream unceasingly of large blobby bonnets on long wrinkly ribbon legs, chasing her up hill and down dale all over the world.

### XXIII

“ My own hope is, a sun will pierce  
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched ;  
That after Last returned the First,  
Though a wide compass round be fetched ;  
That what began best can't end worst,  
Nor what God blessed once prove accurst.”

JANE'S first sensation on awaking the next morning was of wonder ; of a new load to be carried ; of weakness. Everything showed this last, even her dreams ; and it was not strange that people should distrust her ability, nor that Mrs. Saunders should have found it so necessary to direct her so carefully, and to smile as she had done over her feeble struggles. And now how contemptible was her motive ; risking all that she had, to protect herself from things that she should have been strong enough to endure. She was not going from strength to strength, but in exactly the opposite direction ; had sunk so low as to have been afraid of those women's comments on the bonnets. What had become of her self-control, had she overworked it ?

The dream of helping her father had faded to the farthest limits of her vision. He did not approve of her position ; no one did ; and so, of course, he would not approve of the results ; and in the place of that

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hope she had not put any noble determination to help her kind, or even her sex, as Ned Beaton had thought. She was only hopelessly into another weak snarl, the only gain from which was the ability to write to her mother that she had an engagement for the summer. This would prevent any urging as to her coming home; this was what she had worked for, and already her little payment, her puerile little payment had come. All that was left her now was to be successful in a pecuniary way, no matter how small; indeed, the size of her venture compelled her to be very small.

Armed with these conclusions of a forlorn hope, she went to the shop that afternoon at the earliest possible hour, only to find that Mrs. Tomkins was in the next shop waiting for her, and that Mrs. Dunlap followed close on her heels.

"I think that this will be a nice place to come and chat of an afternoon," Mrs. Tomkins said, and seated herself in the middle of the sofa.

"If I had time I'd take embroidery lessons," Mrs. Dunlap said, suggestively.

"Embroidery lessons?" Mrs. Tomkins repeated, coming over to where Mrs. Dunlap was examining the contents of a box. "Do you teach embroidery, Miss Jane? I didn't know that; I believe I would like to do some centre-pieces."

Then Jane, remembering her recently made resolution as to small gains, displayed in a way that she despised the different patterns that had been sent, with the shaded silks to match.

"Fifty cents a lesson," Mrs. Dunlap put in.

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"I believe I will." And Mrs. Tomkins pulled off her gloves. "If I had a thimble."

Thanks to Laurence Creswick, there was a thimble at hand; for by the advice of an interested shopman, he had sent some "Fancy touches" along with the regular stock, and there were one or two gaudy work-boxes, with tinsel fittings, and one or two glove-boxes of the same type. Now a thimble was abstracted, and the first customers, Mrs. Wheeler and Mrs. Miller, found a very sociable, busy scene when they entered.

"How nice!" they cried.

"Delightful!" Mrs. Dunlap answered; "and we've each bought a bonnet!"

Of course two more bonnets were bought promptly, the newcomers fortunately selecting others than those already purchased; then Mrs. Miller struck a new note. "You've bought first," she said, "but I'll wear first. You can put my bonnet on right away, Miss Jane, and I'll go make some calls. It'll bring quicker sales."

At once there was a chorus of demands that all the bonnets be put on. "And we'll go different ways," Mrs. Dunlap finished. Jane felt as if a small whirlwind had struck her, but she adjusted the bonnets to the various heads, each lady buying a new veil, which she also arranged, shivering when the money was paid her, and feeling as if her dream had come true when she saw the four bonnets streaming away to the four quarters of the town.

At supper that evening Mrs. Dunlap was in a flutter of pleased excitement; so much so that she actually drove Mr. Dunlap into speech. "I thought bonnets



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were for the outsides of heads," he said; "but it seems yours have got to the insides."

"It does seem so," the wife admitted. "But it's been ever so pleasant; nice things have been said, Miss Jane, and you won't have one left by to-morrow. Can't you get some more trimmed quick?"

And her prognostications were quite true. There was a run on Jane's stock the very next afternoon, and orders left to be filled. That evening Jane brought home a lot of material, and far into the night she sat working. Of course this rush could not last, for the demand in the place was necessarily extremely limited, and it would be wise to have something to sell besides hats and embroideries. Every shop in the town combined things, and in order to survive, she must combine things, too. Some summer lawns, perhaps, with one or two ready-made dresses, and perhaps she could introduce a tea-table. Sell the tea to the women who were using the shop as a gathering-place, Mrs. Tomkins having actually sent down a comfortable chair for herself. The outlay for the experiment would be very small, and the next afternoon found a kettle boiling on a small oil-stove, a small table set, and a card up to say, "*Tea, ten cents a cup.*"

Great was the surprise; but it was popular, and Jane was looked on as a most resourceful young woman, a person who knew things; and Mrs. Wheeler decided that she, also, would send down a comfortable chair. Jane's hands soon became overful, and she began to wonder where she would find any rest, any time for exercise; for just as her afternoons were spent in the

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shop, so were her evenings spent in working to fill her orders, and her walking was reduced to the distance between the house and the shop. Further, she had to give up going for her letters, begging the grocer next door to bring them when he went for his own; and she looked back with wonder, almost with longing, to the time when, on her first arrival, the days had seemed so endless. It would be better, however, once the school was over, only that by that time the rush would be over, too, for, as far as she could judge, she had hatted very nearly the whole of Stony Ridge; and sometimes in the Methodist church she would shut her eyes to keep out the vision of her week's handiwork.

The lawns were sent for and the pattern-dresses; then some magazines and cheap novels were added, and more money was sent to Laurence Creswick for stationery and wholesale candy. A counter was put in, and Jane felt herself a regular shopkeeper. The weather grew warmer, and iced tea took the place of the hot brew. Jane put up a wire door, and tacked nettings over the windows and furnished fans to keep the flies away; she must keep the place attractive, for many small things were sold to the people who gathered there to see each other.

Then June came all too swiftly; and because it brought blazing heat, and because the mothers suddenly demanded a display at the end of the school term, Jane was in despair. She was so tired, so worn with the heat and the flies, and the buzz of the little town, and now came this totally unexpected request for what

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was ambitiously called a "Commencement"; "Dialogues," it was explained, "and recitations, and some music and refreshments." Of course the mothers would furnish the refreshments; "Miss Jane would only have to prepare the children." There was nothing to do but to get through the examinations, such as they were, as quickly as possible, and put the last days into this flimsy show; it was really dreadful, almost tragic, this last unexpected straw! It caused a fresh run on the shop, however, for each little girl had to have a new white frock and a sash, and each boy a ribbon cravat. And as soon as this was over, her salary would cease, and her living would have to go on. She would make up her accounts carefully, would see what she had in the shop, would write to Laurence Creswick that she would not need anything more, then would try to sell what she had on hand—fortunately it was not very much. She would do all this at once, before her last month's salary came in, so that if it were very disastrous, she would be able to say to herself, "The end of June will bring in fifteen dollars."

She sighed; she was a coward still; and she covered herself with contemptuous thoughts. Laboriously she went over her accounts, valuing the stock on hand at less than cost, and found that she had cleared just fifteen dollars! Her heart went up a little. She could at least tell Ned Beaton that she had not failed; and if, by chance, she did not sell what she had left, she would even then clear expenses. Make a fortune! But she had just begun; and beginnings cost, people had told her; experience cost, too; she was doing bet-

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ter than she had any right to expect, and just let her get over this stupid exhibition, and she could rest a little. It would be better to come down to the shop in the morning, as well as the afternoon; she could bring some books with her, and, in a way, make herself comfortable. She would have to look after her clothes, too, and after awhile the hot weather would be over.

That she had not lost ought to cheer her; and the next day she tried to put a little more energy into her teaching, a little more fire into Joey's declamation, into the dialogue over which Nannie and Tena were laboring. The little Tomkins, who had seemed absolutely hopeless, did better, and the little Millers and Wheelers came out in a way that was almost startling. All due to her wonderful success in business! It was ridiculous how she allowed things to depend on her moods; fancy a business depending on moods; as quickly as possible she must make herself into a machine; then she might hope to succeed in some direction.

So she wound herself up to the last supreme effort of the last afternoon. The little school-house was packed to suffocation, people standing outside and filling in the windows as well, and it seemed to Jane impossible to breathe. In the window nearest the stage Ned Beaton leaned, and she did not dare to look at him after the first recognition; she did not feel able to face the cheerful amusement she knew there would be in his eyes. Indeed, she looked at no one, but spent her energies in marshalling the hopelessly conscious children, knowing that each mother was watching with jealous eye for the prominence of her own offspring. Poor

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little souls, how hard they tried to do her credit, gluing their eyes to hers until she would have to shake her head, which would cause them to look up to the ceiling, or straight at the farthest wall. How the boys' hands clung to the outside seams of their trousers, and how the girls grasped their little handkerchiefs and fans, as if they were weapons of defence. How the beads of heat and nervous terror stood out on their foreheads and noses, threatening to take all the curl out of their hideously frizzed hair, or drop like dreadful tears down on their new ribbons! Poor little souls, how foolish to have shown them off! But the mothers were charmed, and the town amazed, and Mrs. Dunlap said that all the children in Stony Ridge would come to the school, if they were allowed; but of course the aim of the mothers was to keep the children separate from the other children.

The entertainment afterward was out on the grass. Ice-cream, and cake, and lemonade, and some of Jane's stock of mixed candy. And Jane moved about, talking and laughing, and being astonished with each mother over the respective prowess of each child. She became almost hysterical at last, and when Ned Beaton came up to speak to her, she gave him such a glance of appeal that he turned his badinage into a short farewell and went away, taking Tena with him.

That night she slept the sleep of sheer exhaustion, and the next morning had but one sensation, a sensation of collapse such as a stringed instrument might have when, being strung up to the very last turn of the screws, the bridge crumbles under the strain. She

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hated the trampled look of the grass, the piles of chairs on the piazza, and in the school-room the books, and chalk-boxes, and ink-stands huddled into unusual corners. She hated everything, and more than all, the vision brought to her by a letter from home, that of the Saunders and Marion preparing to go to Europe. She knew it all so well; remembered it as the one compensating thing in her whole life; and those last voyages. She seemed to hear the rush and swish of the waves, to see the high mast cutting its arc against the star-set, black sky; she seemed to hear Mark's low voice, to look straight into his shining eyes. This vision as she marched down to the shop. She drew a sharp breath as she unlocked the door; he was false; she hated him; she must not remember. If Ned Beaton should come in now she would tell him that she was sorry; that she hated the shop; that she hated the little town. Why under heaven had they built the town down in a hollow? it had to be hot shut in with hills on every side. Then she recalled that in the winter the people had said: "We are so sheltered by the hills that we are not so cold as other towns, or even as Mrs. Dunlap's place." Of course they would not now say we are hotter than other towns because we are in a valley; of course not; instead, they would explain that this was an unusual season. What a pity it was that humanity did not defend its friends in this same faithful way! On the contrary, almost anyone would be ready to lower the voice and raise the eyebrow, and explain carefully the faults and failings of the next one, gently, regretfully, maybe, but relentlessly. They almost seemed to feel it a duty.

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She lifted the curtain and looked at the hats in the window; how she hated them, fading out even as she was, as soon as a strong light fell on them! How wise she was becoming, how pharisaical! she had not talked about her neighbors because she had never had anyone with whom to be confidential. Mrs. Saunders had always rebuked her for her opinions, even when she was trying to agree with Mrs. Saunders; and so, in self-defence, she had learned to be silent. Mrs. Saunders had taught her a great deal; more than Mrs. Saunders realized, probably; and if she ever succeeded in anything, Mrs. Saunders would claim the credit as due to her training. It would be if only because Mrs. Saunders had driven her out into the world. It seemed to her now that her life had been like the old torture of dropping water; there had never been more than a drop at a time, but there had come a moment when the next drop would have crazed her, and she had broken away. Yes, Mrs. Saunders had been a most clever torturer, a most clever woman; undoubtedly so.

Laurence Creswick was agreeing with her about Mrs. Saunders's cleverness as he walked through the streets at an unusually early hour for him. He had been seeing a great deal of Mrs. Saunders, for there had been a tremendous progression in his friendship with the household. He had felt that it brought him nearer to Jane; that he was, in a way, becoming one of them; and besides, he was very fond of Marion, in a brotherly way, and had, in a measure, guided her through her first winter. Mrs. Saunders had constantly consulted him as to the best things to be done, and the girl herself had turned to him in many ways. She

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was a charming little thing; more vivacious than Jane, and most engagingly frank. He had been watching Mark Witting lately, and once more wondering why Mrs. Saunders let him come so much to the house. Witting had admired Jane greatly; but he felt almost sure that Witting was in love with Marion, which must be pointed out to Mrs. Saunders as being dangerous.

Ever since the evening before, when he had received a note from Mrs. Saunders, asking him to come and see her this morning, Creswick had been going over these things in his mind. The appointment was for such an unusually early hour, such an unheard-of hour, just after breakfast, that it must mean that she wished to consult him about something important. Of late she had been doing this more than ever, alleging as excuse that Mr. Saunders did not, and would not keep up with the world. "He is a Southerner, you know," she had added, laughing, "and what I call laziness, he calls repose."

Yes, she was an unusually clever woman, and a very handsome one into the bargain; and he liked her now better than at first he had ever thought possible. It was quite probable that she had been a little hard on Jane, a little hard. It was queer how difficult it was for women to get on with each other. Mothers-in-law, and sisters-in-law, and maiden aunts, and the like, were always cooling off and withdrawing from each other—very queer—but to men Mrs. Saunders was most agreeable.

Simmons ushered him into the drawing-room, so cool and shadowy in its summer whiteness of fresh cover-



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ings, and palms and ferns, and filled with the perfume of flowers. How charming now, when things usually looked a little done, a little put away for the yearly flitting, a little as if people were not expected; here everything was fresher and more enticing even than in the full rush of the winter season. She must be an exceptionally good manager, Mrs. Saunders, and have uncommonly well-trained servants. Why need one go away from such a home as this for the summer? In the old times, when people stayed at home all the year round, it was then that people loved their homes. This running about from place to place was bound to be subversive of the family. Charming! and he walked about, looking at the pictures more carefully than ever before. How well chosen each one was, how artistically framed!

The carriage came to the door; had he made a mistake in the hour? and he looked at his watch. No, he had been absolutely on time. Perhaps Mrs. Saunders wished him to go somewhere with her; and he stood at the window with his hands behind him, looking out between the filmy curtains. Presently a step sounded in the hall, and he turned, to see Marion in the crispest and freshest blue, holding out her hand.

"Good-morning. Where did you drop from at this hour?"

"I am here by appointment," taking her hand and thinking how really lovely she was. "I am waiting for Mrs. Saunders."

"And I am doomed to the dressmaker; and it is going to be warm in a half-hour."

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"If you would just drive about the town," Creswick went on, still looking down on the charming picture, "I'm sure that blue gown would cool off the whole atmosphere."

"How punctual you are." And Mrs. Saunders entered. "Not gone yet, dear child?" patting Marion on the shoulder. "You will be late."

"I wish I need not go," with an upward glance at Creswick, "but cousin says that, in one way or another, we pay for everything in life; and so my frocks call on me for a hot, tempestuous morning."

"She grows prettier every day," Creswick said, when, at last, with the door carefully shut, he found himself sitting opposite Mrs. Saunders.

"And more charming," Mrs. Saunders added. "In the little while that she has been with me, she has given me more affection and confidence than Jane did in all the years of her life."

Creswick had made a compact with himself never to discuss Jane with Mrs. Saunders, but now she looked him straight in the eyes and he had to answer. "Miss Ormonde was more reserved than her sister."

"Is that what you call it?" And Mrs. Saunders smiled. "You are delightfully loyal to your friends, Mr. Creswick, even when they walk off without explanation. Now, however, I have a more serious matter in hand. Chaperons and guardians, you know, have duties that are not only serious, but very often disagreeable; and I have explained as to my husband——"

Creswick looked up quickly. "Anything in the world that I can do," he said.

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Mrs. Saunders bowed. "In the case of Jane," she went on, "I must confess to carelessness; to a too unquestioning faith in a seemingly unsullied young girl——"

"Mrs. Saunders!"

She raised a silencing hand. "You have no defence to make in that case," she said. "You asked no permission; you also took advantage of my trustfulness, my unsuspecting nature, did you not?"

"I certainly addressed Miss Ormonde, but if it were a breach of etiquette, a man is sometimes carried away by his feelings——"

"Not once, but many times," Mrs. Saunders quoted. "No, Mr. Creswick," she went on, "I am afraid that you are without an excuse; and your action, then, arms me now."

Creswick was now leaning back, looking at his companion with a questioning, puzzled look. She answered the look quietly, and her voice was quiet also. "You are a gentleman, and my friend, and I introduced you to this new little cousin, which means that I trusted you. All winter I have watched you, and the world has watched you, also; and we—the world and I—have come practically to the same conclusion. The world, that you love Marion, and I, that your attentions demand explanation."

"My dear Mrs. Saunders!" And Creswick leaned forward eagerly; but the well-shaped hand, so white, so hard, went up in a gesture that Jane could have told him it was useless to combat.

"Especially as I find that these attentions have had serious effect."

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There was dead silence for a moment, then Creswick said, slowly: "As a chaperon, my dear Mrs. Saunders, you are over-anxious. I have approached your cousin only as a friend, and promise that I will not do otherwise."

"Thank you. As I began by saying, I trusted you; I thought that the talk which we enjoyed one fateful afternoon had sufficiently impressed my views on you as to the attention permissible. Your attentions to Jane were not at all marked, and I had there some excuse for my lack of suspicion, especially when I had discovered that the young woman's affections were placed elsewhere."

Creswick winced a little, but kept his eyes fixed on Mrs. Saunders with the same quiet, inquiring look.

"This is quite true," she went on, as if in answer to the slight movement; "but now, all winter, in fact, your attentions to Marion have been most marked."

"As a brother, Mrs. Saunders; as a man who was and is desperately in love with her elder sister; as one who looked on this girl as a trust to be guarded and made happy for the sake of the elder sister."

"Most admirable; but, unfortunately, sisters seldom look on things of this kind with just such magnanimous eyes, and chaperons have no right to. You made no such explanations."

"You *knew*."

"Nothing but that 'Men have died, and worms have eaten them, but not for love.' I knew that one sister had refused you, and that nothing was more natural than that love should be caught on the rebound by the

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other sister. After all, you are but a man, with like passions——”

“With one passion,” Creswick interrupted, “that will never die.”

“You are unfortunate in the way in which you show that fact to your friends. You should have told the child this.”

“Impossible.”

“And have warded off what has happened.”

“My dear Mrs. Saunders, you are mistaken in your suggestion; pray do not make it again. For Miss Marion Ormonde’s sake, for your own sake, I beg you to desist.”

Mrs. Saunders drew a rose from a vase near by, letting all the long, wet stem and leaves trail across her dainty ribbons, her fresh laces. She looked deep into the heart of it, she drew it through her half-closed hand once, twice, thrice, each time more quickly, more recklessly, at last dragging it to death and casting it from her, then looking down on her open palm, torn by the thorns.

The silence between them grew tense, Creswick looking at her, she looking down at her hand; so tense that Creswick could not stand it; he rose.

“Mrs. Saunders——” It was as if a spell had been broken.

“Hush!” And she struck her hands together. “Hush! No more smooth excuses; the child loves you—loves you—oh, God! loves you with all her untouched heart; lives only in your presence; watches your every movement; tells me softly of each word you say, each

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look you give her, whispering 'He loves me, cousin, he loves me, and earth is turned to Heaven!' And you stand here calmly," rising and facing Creswick, "stand here and tell me coldly that you mean nothing? All these long months dogging her footsteps, claiming her at balls, standing possessively behind her chair in the full blaze of the whole opera-house! You mean nothing, have meant nothing, you have always loved her sister; her sister, who kept you dangling, to hide her affair with Mark Witting; who allowed Mark Witting to think her my heiress; whom Mark Witting, finding out, quietly jilted? Who, finding herself discovered, fled?"

Creswick stood still before her, grown white, the lines about his lips drawn sharply.

"Look back," coming closer to him. "Look back, think, recall, and you will see my words written in fire of truth! Mark Witting's attentions were quiet, paid under cover of your attentions. Suddenly Mark Witting goes away; you remember? And Jane changed; looked ill; talked strangely; found that Mark Witting had confessed to me, and fled. Look back—think—remember!"

Again the silence grew tense between them, as if there were no hum in the street; as if all life were being stilled with the life of the man who listened.

"She did not flee at once," the low voice went on; "she was too deep for that—perhaps you would say 'reserved'?—but waited, waited, in order to save appearances. And I, sorry for her, wishing to put something between us that would make life together

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bearable; wishing to seem as if I had forgiven, had forgotten, had cured me of my contempt, I sent for her young sister. Thank God that she did save appearances, for ugly things could and would have been said. I did not tell you, no; I wished to help her to save appearances. All the autumn you read together and I hoped that she had come to her senses, was ashamed, was coming to appreciate you; but again she was using you as a screen; using you to hide her plans; and for aught I know, she may be using you still. You are a loyal gentleman; yes, you are that, but you have deceived me."

She walked away to the window; she stood there looking out to where the sun had crept up to the edge of the window-awnings, throwing up from the hot pavement a reflected light that the window-plants turned green before it reached the ceiling. She looked down to the glaring sunshine, followed it up to the plants, to the ceiling, pausing a moment with raised head, then went back, went close to Creswick and looked into his eyes.

"You hate me," she said. "I do not blame you; I have cast down your idol; I have torn the veil away from all your illusions; I seem to have wrecked your life; but you drove me to it. When I could have told you, nearly a year ago, I did not do it; I was willing to sacrifice you, because I was trying to save my own. I hoped that Jane would have sense enough to accept you and take her proper place in life and the world. Yes, I would have sacrificed you to Jane, but I will not sacrifice Marion; never! Jane it is who has

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wrecked her own life, my husband's life, your life; but she shall not wreck Marion's life; never! You have blundered; blundered because you were blinded, deceived; and blunders are paid for pretty much as sins are; you have blundered, and the day of reckoning is here. How could I know that you stood behind Marion's chair because you had got into the habit of standing behind her sister's chair? How could I know that you looked into her eyes, danced with her, sent her flowers, sat dances out with her all for her sister's sake? How could she know it? I gave you credit for some sense, and she, in her ignorance and innocence, mistook it all for love. If any woman had treated you in that way, you would quickly enough have thought that she loved you. What is a woman to do but accept attentions, and believe that a gentleman means them? That having deliberately wakened her heart, having made her betray her feelings, he will stand to his actions. And a gentleman will, 'though it were to his own hindrance——' ”

For one moment Creswick seemed galvanized into life; she had quoted from his own creed.

“Yes,” Mrs. Saunders went on, and she laid her hand on his arm; “I quote scripture to bear me out; but why need I? Custom, breeding, truth, honor, everything is on my side. Jane does not love you, you know that; your only hope was to wear her out; to create, as you expressed it, the Creswick habit. Even that seems now a forlorn hope. She has gone off to live her own life, to make her own career—God knows what it will end in—but if justice is meted out to



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her, nothing good ought to come to her. You tell me that she is satisfied, is successful; and whatever that may mean, it does not seem to mean that she is hungering or thirsting for you. My conclusions seemed to me to warrant me in permitting your attentions to Marion. I could not believe for one moment that you did not mean them; I can scarcely credit my senses now when you tell me that you have not meant them. You must mean them! you must justify her to the world that is gabbling about it all! At least let her go to Europe engaged to you, and I promise that I will object to the match. I will work tooth and nail to wean her away from you; I will proclaim her my heiress; I will dazzle her with the world and worldly things, and persuade her to release you. Let me tell her that you came this morning to ask permission to address her? This is Wednesday; we sail on Saturday. For only two days you will have to wear a mask, will have to see us off with fruit and flowers, then you will have long months in which to come to an agreement with yourself. I can and will prolong indefinitely our stay in Europe. You can go into business, any kind of business, as an excuse for not following us. I seem to be laying deep and devious plans to deceive this child whom I love; don't think it. I am, instead, trying to save her the first break to her heart; trying to ward off the first deadening blow that turns all the world black; trying to make a woman's awful lesson of life a little easier to her. Think; I've had no children of my own. My heart was hungry and I took Jane; from the first moment, she defied me; all our life together was one long

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effort. She would not love me; and until Marion came, I thought that perhaps she could not; but this child came to me with open arms; she loved me at once. In this little while she has given me the love I craved; and must I not be grateful? Must I not love her, and try to save her? I am not trying to deceive her; no, I am trying to make it so easy for you that you will be persuaded not to strike her; poor little trustful child! Only for two days, then I will take her away and relieve you of anything save a weekly composition. It will not be hard, and I will strive, that you shall not be called upon to consummate it."

She stopped abruptly, and on the deathly stillness there broke the mad clamor of a street-organ. Through all the storm of words Creswick had stood absolutely still, with his eyes fixed on a picture—a woman, was all he saw—then, as the voice beside him went on and on, he saw that the picture was Mrs. Saunders; Mrs. Saunders, smiling a little; smiling while she told him such cruel things; while, at her summons, such bitter memories came back slowly, one by one, and smote him dully. No, he could not refute one word that she had said. Jane had refused him; Jane had run away; Jane did seem satisfied. In his pocket, at that moment, was her last letter, saying that she was not going to trouble him any more. Her shop had paid her, and there would be little doing through the summer. That she had tried his patience and his friendship severely, too severely. A letter that had seemed like a dash of cold water in his face when he had read it, until the end, when she said, "You have been so good to me! God

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bless you!" And Jane had talked to him about a man who had not been noble. Why did he remember that? And Witting had gone away just at that time, just a little before that time, and she would not let him mail the package that day; that strange day, when everything had seemed to change. No, Jane did not love him, and Mrs. Saunders, smiling there on the wall, said that Marion did. But for this, he could go away, and at least hide himself, "Have his dark hour unseen." Jane did not love him. It was none of his business whom she had loved; but that Mark Witting should have jilted her; have cast away this woman whom he had looked on as too good, too pure, too sweet! Mark Witting had put his arm about her, perhaps. His heart seemed almost to stop beating; and the picture on the wall seemed to smile more mockingly. Great God! and he reverencing her as his own soul, had thrilled at the touch of her hand, had been almost sorry when she danced with him. When her face looked up so close to his he had turned his head away; and she had been jilted by Witting! His arm about her, perhaps Witting had not turned his head away; had kissed her eyes—her lips! He put his hand on a chair-back to steady himself.

The stream of words ceased; but now, along with the minor, "rag-time" melody of the hand-organ, they seemed to be coming back in waves, and breaking over him; as if they had waited somewhere until he had comprehended the story of Jane and Witting, and then had rushed up to him with other sorts of torture. And that tune, that clanging, brazen tune would ring in his

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mind and his ears till he died! Then clearly through all he heard Mrs. Saunders say, "Sit down, and let us finish."

That was kind, and he obeyed. After that, she looked at the clock, then rang the bell, and the man brought some wine and biscuits. She took another rose in her hand while the servant was there, and pulled off some of the petals, dropping them, one by one, on the other wrecked rose, and said what seemed to be queer, unmeaning things.

"I shall have to consider it carefully, Mr. Creswick," she said. "I shall have to consult my husband." Then Simmons went away, shutting the door behind him.

"Drink some wine," were her next words; "one does not look for such faithful hearts in these days; Mark Witting took my revelations as to Jane quite differently; drink some wine; empty the glass. Leave the affair in my hands. I will not tell Marion until tomorrow; you need not see her but once before we leave, and at the steamer, that will be before a crowd. I promise to help you out of it. After a little it will be better; time heals everything."

"Yes," Creswick answered slowly, as if hunting for his words, while Mrs. Saunders watched his face anxiously. What was he going to say, to do? Why would he not drink the wine she still held out to him, and bring some color back to his blue lips, some light to his dead eyes? How awful to lose all comeliness, to grow old in a few minutes!

"Yes," Creswick repeated, "time cures things."

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Then he rose from his chair and drew himself up, and, though the color nor the comeliness were back in his face, the eyes that looked into Mrs. Saunders's eyes were not dead. Quiet they were, and cold as ice, and scornful, matching his voice. "I feel very much honored by your suggestion," he said, "that I have found favor in the eyes of Miss Marion Ormonde. With your permission, Mrs. Saunders, I will call to-morrow evening to receive her answer. Good-morning."

And Simmons, ushering him out, and returning to remove the unusual tray, found wine-stains everywhere, and a shattered glass on the floor with the scattered rose-leaves.

## XXIV

“White shall not neutralize the black, nor good  
Compensate bad in man, absolve him so :  
Life’s business being just the terrible choice.”

IT was an extraordinary piece of news! Jane sat quite still in the shop with a note in her hand. The grocer next door had brought it to her, and there were greasy finger-marks defacing the white correctness of the envelope, and an odor of coal-oil lurking about it and mingling incongruously with the faint perfume of violets with which Mrs. Saunders had endued it. She had been surprised to see that it was from Mrs. Saunders, then had smiled to think how Mrs. Saunders would have shuddered if she could have seen the present condition of her missive. Of course there would be something in it to hurt her; Mrs. Saunders never wrote unless she had a special shaft to send. But the day was so hot, and she was so tired, so unrecovered from the strain, the ridiculous strain of the shop and the school together; and the flies had so buzzed, and droned, and tickled her senses away that she seemed to have lost some of her mind, and had opened the note carelessly.

“I write on the eve of sailing, my dear Jane, to tell you the happy news that Laurence Creswick has

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addressed Marion and has been accepted. He looks a different creature; you would scarcely know him, and there are no words to express my happiness, nor Marion's. I have watched it coming all winter, and the only unhappy person is poor Mark Witting. Dear Laurence will join us in Europe in the autumn. We may be gone a year. I hope that you are accomplishing all that you set out to do. Laurence tells us that you are not only satisfied, but most successful. You will not bear malice if I say that at last I am reconciled to your departure; and Marion has pleased me so much that I am thinking of announcing her as my heiress. Good-by; I cannot help looking on you as mistaken.

“Your affectionate cousin,

“JANE SAUNDERS.”

The hum of the flies rose and fell almost rhythmically. Louder, when weary of trying to get through the netting to the candy or the lemons, they would rise and join the throng that seemed to hum so aimlessly in the upper air of the hot shop; lower, when another swarm would settle where their brethren had failed. Not a sound but this humming disturbed the drowsy noonday stillness, save the intermittent stamping of a horse tied in front of the next shop, and the grind of a locust that somewhere, far away, scraped the song of the summer heat. So still that the hum of the flies seemed to be out of all proportion to their size and ability, and Jane looked up at them slowly. Presently some little negroes went by, wrangling

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among themselves; then a coatless clerk, with his sleeves held up with rubber straps, came in to ask for change.

She rose, and the note slipped to the floor. The young man picked it up and held it while she found her purse, then gave it to her as he turned away. She read it over again, quite slowly; she went back to her seat and her work. Trimming a hat, the last of the season, probably, for a girl out in the country; after that she did not know what she would sell. Of course her stock was there, and if any more hats were wanted she could furnish them. Perhaps some more country girls would want hats. Since the hot weather had come the ladies of the town had ceased to assemble for tea, even the iced tea failed to attract them.

She looked about her. The words "attract them" made her wonder a little. "Dear Laurence tells us that you are not only satisfied, but successful." "Dear Laurence" had obeyed her; she had ordered him to say that—she had impressed it on him that such was the case. She clipped her thread and took a long time to knot it again. "Waiting free until you shall need me," he had said. Could this news be true? Loved someone else. Why had he not written to her about this engagement? Had he remembered his own protestations? Had he feared that she would care? He had loved her well—as well as he could. Men's love seemed not very enduring.

The thread was knotted now, and a few stitches taken. And what a strange thing if Marion should be announced the heiress of the money that Mark



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Witting had so wanted, and how strange that Mark Witting should also love Marion, and that she should prefer Laurence Creswick. Fate was ironical. Poor Mark!

The day wore on. She went up the hot street to Mrs. Dunlap's for the early dinner, and did her best to eat it, but it was too hot, both the day and the dinner, and in spite of the fly-brush which a negro waved incessantly the flies buzzed and hummed as unceasingly as they did down in the shop.

"I believe we're going to have a storm," Mrs. Dunlap said, "it's so sultry. I think it'd almost kill you, Miss Jane."

Jane shook her head, smiling. "We are hard to kill," she answered.

Some more customers came in that afternoon, ordering another hat, and later a storm did roll up, with vivid lightning and a sudden rush of rain. Jane went to the door, but in a moment it was over, and a steam seemed to be rising from the earth. The sun glared down even while the last drops of rain were tinkling in the gutters, and it seemed hotter than before. She went back to her work; it would be called for in the morning. It was an extremely ugly hat, she thought, and she hated it; and a red-headed, freckled girl, with light blue eyes and white eyelashes, was going to wear it. She was going to be married, and this was a part of her outfit, and she had looked so insanely happy. Did Marion look so?

How awfully hot it was; how long would it be before the cool weather would come? She had arrived

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last year early in November, and fires were comfortable, most comfortable. How bright and cool it had been on the hills then; those brown, empty uplands, where the wind had its own way and the crickets cried. She seemed to hear them now, almost, and always connected with her first insane sense of freedom. What was freedom, save another way of saying responsibility?

She looked about her at her freedom. Everyone had left her alone with it, quite alone. She was absolutely free, and she owned the stock in this wonderful shop! It was a great thing, freedom, of course it was; practically it was all, and she still valued it. She had been right, perfectly right. Marion's future would be far more brilliant than hers, and possibly much happier, but then Marion had been fortunate enough to fall in love with the right man. Some people were more fortunate than others; that was all. Some people had to fight every foot of the way through life, while others, like the dreadful hymn, were carried to heaven on "Flowery beds of ease." She would write both to Marion and Creswick that night, sending Marion's letter to the bankers in London. How well she knew the address. It seemed to her that one of her lives or the other must be a dream.

Day after day she went down to the shop, her trade decreasing as the heat increased; but she was always in her place, growing paler and thinner meanwhile. A break came in a note from Creswick, the only brief note she had ever had from him, thanking her for her good wishes. Absolutely correct, but not one word

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more. She was glad on the whole, because it called for no answer, and, not writing to him, the last link with her old life would be broken. Better so. Then an ecstatic note from Marion, ending: "And just think, I can always live in New York now; I can go to Europe whenever I like, and always have beautiful things!"

After this the summer seemed to close in on her, as it were, and the smell of watermelons to pervade the air. Every negro, big and little, seemed to be able to eat melons at all hours of the day, and to be allowed to eat them where they pleased, and to be followed usually by pigs that gobbled up the rinds. At first she had had the energy to be astonished and to inquire, but Mr. Dunlap's answer that the negroes voted down all laws of public cleanliness reduced her energy to keeping them from the front of her own door. Later she had given up even this protest; she had come to watch the greedy joy of the melon-eaters with some amusement, and after them the pigs that squealed and grunted and jostled each other over the *débris*. Sometimes the Dunlap children would come to the shop; sometimes Tena would be left there by a servant who was going farther on an errand, and on Sunday afternoons Jane would take them to walk as of old; a walk that really became something to look forward to, and she began to realize the possible vividness of a small joy in a monotonous life. Yes, she was learning many things, more especially what a minor woe flies were in comparison with mosquitoes!

Life went with deadly quietude, deadly regularity.

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There was no hurry, no push; there could not be in this heat. Never in all her life before had she felt so listless, so as if all her muscles had been cut. She even ceased to wonder why the town had been built down in a hollow. She had an unacknowledged feeling that the wood, and stones, and bricks had rolled down the hills and that the people had piled them up anyhow, anywhere, to shelter themselves from the sun. She'd never blame anyone again for anything in a climate like this.

Sitting in the shop, ripping some of the superfluous lace off of one of her last summer frocks, looking from time to time at some small negroes and their pig satellites eating melons on the curb, and smiling a little at herself that she could be as she was now, and looking back at herself as she had been when last she had worn the frock in hand, she heard a step coming down the empty, sun-baked street, a step strangely alert and firm for the season, and an authoritative voice that scattered the pickaninnies and the pigs, and Ned Beaton came in. It was the first time that he had ever been in the shop, and his greeting was to look about him with a smile, then to come forward to where she had risen from her seat.

"I have been wishing to come here for some time," he began, shaking hands with her, and taking the chair she offered, "but I've been dreadfully busy, and have been over here only once, to your celebration."

Jane smiled slowly. "I was done to death that afternoon," she said, in an almost toneless voice.

"You looked so; but not so dead as now."

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His hand had been so cool and firm, his white clothes and hat were so immaculate, his voice was so deep and strong that new life seemed to be creeping into the air.

Jane raised her eyes to his. "It is the heat," she said, hesitatingly, as if not quite certain.

"Because you are fighting it," was answered, promptly. "We cannot defy climate," he went on, "any more than we can defy fate, and there is no use in trying. All that one can do in the arctic zone is to keep warm, and in the torrid to keep cool; and to attempt to bring the energy or the fashions of one zone into another is the purest folly. At this time of the year and day all people in this section should be taking siestas in appropriate draperies, with iced melons on one hand and iced lemonade on the other, and little darkies to wave fans."

"This is meant for me, I suppose."

"Of course."

"And my shop?"

"Seems just now as if it could keep itself."

Again Jane looked up and smiled with him.

"But," Beaton went on, "I've come on business, and wish to ask a few very direct questions; may I?"

"Yes."

"Has this thing paid you?"

"I have cleared a little money on it."

"Tell me."

"There is not much to tell. I added the freight, and the rent for six months, and the cost of my stock together, and priced things accordingly, and have

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cleared fifteen dollars in all, and now everything that I sell is clear gain."

"And where did you buy your stock?"

"In New York."

"Your freights must have been heavy."

"Yes, but in addition to millinery I have had a tea-table."

"Yes." He leaned back in his chair and looked at the girl. She had grown very thin, but the anatomy of her face was good, and her skin was transparently clear. She was in white, and all the folds of lace she was ripping, and that she had thrown up over her shoulder to keep it off the floor, made a diaphanous cloud about her that lent to the delicacy of her appearance. She went on with the ripping, the clip, clip of her scissors and the hum of the flies being the only sounds to break the stillness. Presently the silence, or Beaton's intent look, caused her to raise her eyes, and she asked: "Is there anything else?"

"Of course," came quickly, "of course. I did not come simply to explore your affairs. But first, about the school; will you continue the shop along with the school?"

Jane shook her head. "I do not think that I can do that again; my present plan is to give up the school. There is not much future in this shop, but there is more than in a select school."

"That is just what I wanted to know, but I had first to try to gauge your business abilities. You were perfectly inexperienced, of course, and you have made this little venture pay, and that in an absolutely dead

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town; further, you are still headstrong enough to wish to continue in business."

"Yes."

"Then my proposition is to buy you out, lock, stock, and barrel, as we say down here, and to move you over to my town."

Jane stopped her clipping, and raised her head.

"There is plenty of money behind me," Beaton went on, "and I am manager of and for that money. We have made a combination with another company, and their iron-ore is to be brought down to our coal, and we are to have furnaces and the like. The details do not matter just now, but we are on the main line of road, and the other fellows are on a branch line; so it's cheaper for them to come to us, and this means a growing town in a very little while. So far, we have only one shop over there, which I personally own. I do not keep it, but I built it and stocked it. My plan is to build regular department shops, and have clerks and bookkeepers and the rest of it, and I come to offer you the head of one of the departments, with your expenses and fifty dollars a month."

Jane was listening intently.

"It is not a nice town yet," he continued; "but it is in higher country than this, and much cooler. Everything is new and rough, but clean; I can assure you of that; and everything possible will be done to make you comfortable. Further, there is no risk in it for you, and, let me tell you, the old women in this town wear their bonnets for fifty years."

"Is there any future in it?"

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"Any higher salary? Yes."

"Not that. Is there any advancement; can I rise to the top if I show ability; can I be a part of the business, and grow along with the speculation? You said once," fastening her eyes on him, "that no woman was ever allowed to rise to the top of any corporation where men were engaged, and so I imagine that you are taking me simply as a woman who has managed a very small venture so as not to swamp herself; who may earn a larger salary as time goes on; may even be the head of a department. I won't go on those terms."

"I said," Beaton answered, slowly, as if a little bit surprised, "I said that women did not rise to such positions because they could not be depended on, and we could not depend on them because at any moment they might give up the position for matrimony. I was half way in fun," he continued, taking up the flounce and holding it, so that Jane could go on more readily with the ripping which she had resumed, "but what I said was true."

"Say it again."

"Why, a man, of course, may marry just as soon as he pleases, and it makes no difference to his employer, or to the company of which he is a member; but a woman is otherwise. However hard the case may seem, it is nevertheless the case. Law—limitation—is everywhere, and your law, your limitations, stand up and say, 'you must pause here and make choice, choice between marriage and achievement!' A man may accomplish both, a woman may not."



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"Yes," Jane said, slowly, then added, "and I would be free to choose?"

"I think so; I think that I can arrange it if you pledge yourself," and Beaton looked at her curiously.

There was silence after this, when the hum of the flies and the snip of Jane's scissors again came into prominence; but she made no answer, and Beaton kept his eyes fixed on her with the same inquiring look.

"There is another possibility," he said at last, "that a woman might achieve a fortune early in life, say in the thirties, then of course she would be at liberty to say to some comely young man, 'I have made a fortune; let us join forces and be happy.'"

Jane looked up quickly.

Beaton shook his head. "I mean no harm," he said, "we are talking now as two human beings discussing a problem, not as warring sexes; and doubtless the young man would say yes, and spend her money with alacrity."

Jane returned to her clipping, giving Beaton another bit to hold, in a quite unconscious way.

"This state of things may obtain in the future," Beaton went on, "and we cannot say until it is tried whether it will be a good or a bad change. For one thing, women will have to take life less hysterically, and will have to regard love as men regard it. Men love each other and women deeply and strongly, but if a friend betray one, if a love is false, it is not allowed to wreck one's life. Life must go on, and go on in connection with others, and it is not morally sanitary

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to have graves all about in one's inner consciousness. All such views will have to be altered; women will have to become hardened to many things, and men's taste in women will have to change. If women enter the lists with men they must expect the same hard knocks that men get. I'll grant, God knows, that they get many hard knocks now, poor souls; but buffetings given in private are very different to buffetings given in public. And the misery is, that if this state of things obtains, we cannot tell how it is going to turn out until we have tried it. That's the trouble with all progress; we are obliged to go plunging along blindly most of the time, and all the while knowing that, good or bad, there is no return. And if in this case our sisters, and daughters, and wives grow to be as hard as nails, we'll have to grin and bear it—as I said before, change our taste in women. But we don't want to; women were made to be tender and gentle; they were meant to be timid, and dependent; to be mothers; their eyes were made so sweet to answer the looks of their little children; they were made to keep life kind, to make the world beautiful; why should they strive to be different, to enter our field of labor? We don't want you there, because we love you as you are, where you are. We are not jealous of your progress, but anxious that the poetry of life shall not turn itself into prose; that the roses shall not become cornstalks and cabbages; that the vines shall not become stiff saplings." He drew a long breath and let more flounce slip through his fingers. "This is not business," he went on, "though it came

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out of our business talk quite naturally. To return, there is no need to hurry you in this matter, and you may have a week for consideration."

Jane neither looked up nor answered, and Beaton waited patiently. Quickly the sharp little scissors did their work, and he observed that they had delicately chased silver handles; that the lace he was holding was fine; and the gown itself of a most delicate web. What had brought the girl down to her present surroundings, and what was she thinking now? The curve he had so admired in her cheek and throat was gone, but there was a square set to her delicate chin that pleased him just as well, perhaps better. The girl was high-strung, was spirited; how dreadful for her to be in the plough!—and he spoke again:

"Let me take the liberty," he said, "of begging you to turn back; let me persuade you to decline my proposal, to give up this losing fight and to go back to where you came from. Believe me, the beaten track is best. Somewhere there is a better life for you than this; somewhere there is someone waiting for you—someone longing for you——"

All the bundle of lace and lawn fell about him with a quick dash, and Jane walked swiftly down the shop to the door. Beaton sat quite still, not moving under the burden cast upon him, save to turn his head in the direction of the girl who stood in the doorway. She looked up and down the street, not seeming to heed the glare of the sun that fell all about her; then across to where, exactly opposite, the little negroes, driven away by Beaton, had taken their seats. She

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could see the whites of their eyes as they rolled them around over the tops of the sections of melon in which the rest of their faces were buried. What a ridiculous picture! They were watching the shop, too; waiting possibly for their enemy to appear, and ready for instant flight. How funny they were, and how indescribable was their lingo, mixed with the squeaks of the pigs. "Go back to the one who is longing for you," that was almost as funny as the little negroes and the pigs. "The one who was waiting for her!" Once this man had said, "To those who think, life is a farce"—undoubtedly. Sum up her own life, its irony was amusing, most amusing. And men loved calmly, he said, and when a love or a friend failed them, nothing was wrecked.

What would the little negroes do now? Their melon being eaten to the green skin, they were still watching the shop. She had seen them so often that she felt as if they were old friends, and many times they had diverted her; they had almost become a part of her present death in life, that yet had been bearable. Men were wiser—much. The more she thought, the more forcible it all seemed, and for what did she need a week—to go back to the one who was longing, who was waiting?

She turned with a last look at the jabbering little blacks, a glance that almost seemed to linger as if saying farewell. She walked slowly to her place, gathered back her work from where she had thrown it on Beaton, and sat down. "I do not need a week," she said, looking straight at her companion. "If I

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am permitted, I will put my stock, my work, and what money I have into the business, and will ask to be a member of the company."

"You persist?"

"Yes, I mean to pledge myself to achievement."

"Don't," and Beaton put out his hand as if to stop her from some immediate, tangible peril.

Jane looked at the warning hand as if it were something detached, then up into Beaton's face. His usual expression of amused aloofness was gone, and in its place a new look; Jane studied it for a second, then began to roll up the lace she had ripped.

"Don't," he said again, and now he laid his hand on hers, stopping her work.

"If I may," she answered, "I will. I shall be ready to move to Newtown, Mr. Beaton, just as soon as you need me," and she drew her hand from under his.

## XXV

“ With aching hands and bleeding feet  
    We dig and heap, lay stone on stone ;  
We bear the burden and the heat  
    Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.  
Nor till the hours of light return,  
All we have built do we discern.”

**I**T was a bitterly cold night between Christmas and New Year. The snow was falling thick and fast, and a howling wind was shaking everything that could be shaken, and driving the snow against Jane's blindless windows. There were shades to pull down and curtains to be drawn which would have shut out the wild night, but they had not been touched. The dying fire, too, needed to be repaired, and the hands of the clock were nearing the hour of midnight.

From the day when she had given her decision to Ned Beaton, time for Jane had seemed to go at a hard run, and, despite heat, and dust, and languor, events had seemed to jump over each other in their haste, and she had been obliged to keep up with them. Of course there had been in Stony Ridge lamentations because of her leaving, especially from the children, and deep regrets from the mothers, who felt that never again could they hope to get such a stylish teacher as Jane. Added to this there had been solemn warnings

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whispered among the mothers, and conveyed to Jane by Mrs. Dunlap, warnings as to what people would say when she went to Newtown under the patronage of such a man as Ned Beaton. Jane had seemed to listen, but her preparations had gone on without pause. She had not even asked what they knew against Ned Beaton; his explanation of why he had been called a "sooty sheep" had amused her, and for the rest was his own business, not hers. He could not hurt her; talk could not hurt her; nothing could hurt her but her own folly; nothing had ever hurt her but her own folly. She was always taking steps, good, bad, or indifferent; she would take another and, sooner or later, she would reach either the bottom, or the top step, she did not know which, she had not cared very much, but she had felt that she must go on stepping. She had seemed to be a little bit glad to take this step, and she had not reasoned why; she had been glad to lock the shop-door finally, glad to look her last on the hats and bonnets of Stony Ridge, then in a vehicle sent over from Newtown, she and her belongings had been driven away up the long yellow road, where Tena waved her little handkerchief over the gate, and where, from the hill-top, Jane took a farewell look over the village and across the high green uplands that, when she had first seen them, had been so brown and wind-blown, and where the crickets had cried.

She had found Newtown worthy of its name. Uphill and down-hill; clay roads and stumps; primeval forests with the names of streets nailed to the trees. "Newtown Stores," as her place of work was called,

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was the most imposing building in the place, and from the moment of her entrance there her life had been crammed full of work. She had found, also, that the Ned Beaton of Newtown was quite a different person from the Ned Beaton of Stony Ridge. Clear-headed, prompt, unswerving, nothing done because she was a woman or a friend. She had made her choice, and he had agreed, and from the first she had been treated as a partner in a business concern, and had been early taught that she had to look out for her own interests. It had not been play. The place was rushing on with the sudden, marvellous growth of the towns of the present day, and the "Stores" were designed to fill every possible want of the people so completely, and at such prices, that no private venture could live under its shadow. It was the scheme of Ned Beaton, consented to and invested in by the rest of the company, and Jane, before having been allowed to enter, had been obliged not only to be vouched for in every particular and to invest all her little savings, but had to borrow money in order to be able to put in the amount required from each member of the company. By advice, her next move had been to insure her life for the amount borrowed, and she had then entered into the work with an excitement such as she had never felt before in her life or had ever dreamed it was possible for her to feel.

The summer, and autumn, and winter had swept by with bewildering swiftness, and the town and the Stores had developed beyond the greatest expectations; for all the small towns and villages, every cross-road shop,



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and blacksmith, and carpenter came there to buy their stock and tools. Department after department had been inaugurated; experts of all kinds were employed, and Jane found her office-hours growing longer and longer, and had felt almost as if all the business of the world met and centred on her desk.

According to agreement she had started at the top of the first department, and since then her effort had been to stay at the top; to hold the sway successfully as the business spread and enlarged. Of course Ned Beaton had been there for her to consult, and once a month an overlooking of every department took place, and not yet had he questioned any of her arrangements; nevertheless, his only word of praise had been: "We are so successful, Miss Ormonde, that even the Jew pack-peddlers have given up this section."

At last Christmas had come, and Jane remembered, almost as she remembered the cut-flower gardens and dust cities of her childhood, that the money which had been the germ of all her advancement she had received from her father and cousin just one year ago. She had not told her father of her change of work or of residence; she had not wished to face further disapproval until she was sure of success—until she was out of debt. To compass this her letters were still allowed to go to Stony Ridge, and so it happened that it was not until a day or two after her one day's holiday at Christmas that the memorials of the season reached her. No check had come this time, because she had protested against it, so there were only a few little mementoes and letters, one of which she now

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held in her hand, one that had seemed to make her forget the falling temperature of the room and the uses of the curtains.

Very still she sat, while the dead, white ashes gathered over the fire and the snow banked drearily against the windows.

Laurence Creswick ruined; Marion engaged to Mark Witting! That was what she had read in her mother's letter that had seemed so strange. Was it she who was confused or the letter? She had read it more than once, but the confusion remained. Her mother was puzzled, and her father. There was something extraordinary behind it all. What had Mrs. Saunders done; what was Marion suffering? Her mother was confused, her father puzzled; they could not understand Mrs. Saunders. Perhaps—perhaps they might now begin to understand her!

"Lost his fortune by wild speculation," the letter said, and yet Laurence Creswick had never been in business. It seemed an impossible thing. Had Marion jilted him first, and then had he thrown away his money? That was the order in which the facts had been mentioned; that was what Mrs. Saunders would like them to believe; but that was not like Laurence Creswick. He was too well balanced, too sensible. Despair would never possess him to that extent. He had loved *her*, herself, she knew that he had loved her. "Waiting free until you may need me, will not be waste," he had said. He had loved her deeply; later she had added, as deeply as he could. And a man who could change so quickly would be too fickle to

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be driven to desperation. Had he really loved Marion? Why had she accepted that as true? There was something extraordinary behind. And Marion had seemed to be so fortunate; she had loved the right man, the rich man; according to the letter she had rendered the rich man desperate by jilting him in order to marry the poor one. That was not like Mrs. Saunders.

The rich man had lost his money; how, why? Why had he touched speculation? Why had he not gone with them to Europe, and idled the time away? It would have gone quickly, so quickly in a dream of love. Why had they not married at once? But now Mark Witting was the lover. How soft his voice could be, how winning his smile. And he would get the money he had wanted. Her thoughts seemed to halt. How did she know that Mark Witting had wanted the money? She had had no proof; had never had any proof except Mrs. Saunders's word.

She drew her hand across her brow. Too late to go back to that; yet, just a moment. What would have been Mrs. Saunders's motive? Mark Witting was poor, Laurence Creswick was rich. And who was it had told her that Mark Witting was dangling after his old aunt, hoping to inherit her fortune? Mrs. Saunders. Too late to go back to that; but how easily she had been managed—if she had been managed.

The murder of her childhood, the murder of her youth. She clasped her hands about her knees, crumpling the letter in them, and swayed back and forth a little in her chair. Too late for that, and she had no proof. She straightened up and smoothed the

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letter out. She had let that part of her life go. That Jane Ormonde, so young, so cowed, so desperate, had been done to death long ago. The murder of her childhood; the murder of her youth. That Jane Ormonde was dead and buried, and her grave levelled and sodded over decently. Let it be. Poor girl; poor little child; and there had been no one to have mercy!

Again she smoothed the letter, smoothed it out as carefully as if it were a vital thing that it should be returned into the original folds. Two sisters and one set of lovers, what a poor little farce! Men took things more quietly. "If a friend or a love were false, it did not wreck things." This last man, this Ned Beaton, with his cheerful smile, had said that. He had had occasion to study women, he had said, of course, and who knew what his study had done; who knew where the women were who could have told. Did not wreck things. She stopped smoothing the letter. It was not true, for here was a man who apparently had wrecked things. And women took life too hysterically; what more hysterical than to throw away a fortune? and a man, a well-balanced man had done that. Why had he done it?—a whole big fortune. How strange it was, and now he was free once more. She would give no sign. "Hard as nails," she would be a flint before life had done with her, life and Mrs. Saunders.

She laughed a little, then looked about her as if startled, as if the echoing sound of her own mirth had wakened her. She looked at the dying fire, at the ghostly staring windows, and began to shiver. All

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over, from head to foot, she shivered. Mrs. Saunders would kill her yet. Never! She would be sane, she would stop shivering. No one should ever know. She would stamp down the grave of that child, that Jane Ormonde, flatter still, until no vestige remained. She would never wonder, never investigate, never go below the surface of what Mrs. Saunders had done, of what Mrs. Saunders's motives had been. The judgment-day would be soon enough to solve the problem; would be soon enough to know how nearly Mrs. Saunders was related to the fates. Now this present Jane Ormonde, the head of the Newtown Department Stores, would build the fire; would draw the curtains; would stop shivering; would harden, harden to the nails that life could not hurt; would go to bed.

In the pile of ordinary correspondence on her desk the next day she came upon a letter from Mr. Saunders. He had not written to her since the Christmas before, so of course it was only a Christmas letter. There was only a second's hesitation, then the little paper-cutter slipped in and along the edge as swiftly and as surely as usual. The Christmas check which she could not forestall as she had done her father's, because she had no right to presume on its being sent, and she put it down quickly. Only a half-sheet, written late at night from his club in Paris. All were well. Marion, Mrs. Saunders, and Witting were at the opera. Jane must always remember that, though he did not write, she was continually in his thoughts, and she must call on him at any time for anything; he loved her very much, and had never forgiven himself. Yes,

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there was something very strange behind, but it was not for her to investigate. Mark Witting nor Laurence Creswick were anything to her now, nor was she responsible for Marion. From the letters of Marion, which had been forwarded to her, the girl seemed spirited enough. Her childhood had not been cowed, and she was capable of taking care of herself. It was wiser for Jane to keep quiet, and she settled the matter by answering Mr. Saunders to the club, as he had directed, and by saying frankly to her mother that she did not understand Marion nor Mrs. Saunders and their change of plan. Her hand trembled a little as she went on to the next letter of her pile, but only for a moment, then her nerves steadied, and business was resumed.

After this she threw herself into her work with more earnestness than ever, and her past life, that for a moment had surged up about her so suddenly, flashing out at her so vividly, was put out of sight once more to become shadowy and unreal. The weeks went into months, and the spring came upon her with astonishing swiftness, but no further word had come to her concerning Creswick. The Saunders and Marion had not returned from Europe, and apparently were making no plans in that direction; but they seemed to be happy and well, and Marion wrote with seeming cheerfulness. "She does not take things hysterically," Jane said to herself, "and is wiser than ever I was."

June came in hot and glaring, and Jane had been in Newtown for one year. It did not seem so long as that, and she felt a sudden gladness to think how

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swiftly and imperceptibly life sped by; how impossible it would be for it to seem long. As the town grew, the business would grow, and her life would be fuller and the days go more quickly. So it was that men lived down things. And she was prospering, too; she had almost paid her debt to Ned Beaton, would make the last payment in July, and that done, she would feel herself on the way to making the fortune she had laughed about; that, later, she had despaired over. In the middle of the month Ned Beaton came to her.

"I am going away for a week," he said, "at the end of that time I shall return, and as soon as things can be turned over to me I will take your place for a month. The first two weeks you will spend in New York as a buyer; the last two weeks you will take as a holiday."

"I would rather have my holiday in the winter," Jane said, quickly.

"You need it now," Beaton answered, "and for the good of the work you must take it. You don't look quite as dead as you did last year at this time, but you look dead enough. Perhaps we can arrange for a week at Christmas also. Of course the company will pay all your expenses to and from New York—expenses, mind, not ticket," smiling down at her, "and all your expenses as a buyer. We will have a little while after I come back so that you can turn things over to me, and I only hope, Miss Ormonde, that I will do it half as well as you have done it. The company is thoroughly satisfied, and now that you are out of debt you can resign as any of us could, but we hope that you will not."

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Going back to New York! Of course in August it would be absolutely empty of anyone she knew, and she was glad that it should be so; but the very sight of the streets, of the Saunders's house, of the dark green door and the egg-shaped brass knobs, and the round latch that had clicked! How strange to see it all again. She might see old Simmons—kind old Simmons, who stayed on so steadily, who was so devoted to Mr. Saunders; who in a quiet way ruled Mrs. Saunders. She might see him; he used to be left in charge of everything when they were in Europe. Simmons had always been good to her, had always been sorry for her. Then she could spend her two weeks' holiday at the seashore somewhere, she had a great longing for the water. There she could rest from working or feeling; keep still because the sea would be there to move continually and take the restlessness away. That would be a true reward for all her labor, for all the flies, for all the mosquitoes! She had not known how tired she was until the holiday had been offered her. For her New York would be empty, but she could walk the streets she knew; could go to the church of her childhood and sit in the same seat, the uncomfortable middle seat in the pew, and imagine Mr. and Mrs. Saunders at either end. She could drive in the park as she used to do, those weary long drives when all her faults and failings used to be led in review before her hopeless eyes. There would not be any opera or theatre to go to, but there would be memories enough without that.

Going back to New York! Then a new thought



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came up, she would be entirely alone, absolutely unattended! Going to hotels, to watering-places alone! How horrified Mrs. Saunders's world would be, and she laughed. For a year she had worked with men, had had men working under her direction; how supremely absurd a chaperon would seem to her now—what a bore! But Simmons would be shocked if he knew, and if she stumbled on any whom she had known they might ignore her because of her unprotected state. How funny! and she laughed, ending with a long sigh. What a poor, frightened thing she had been.

There were no terrors for her in this journey, rather a sense of triumph was coming over her. In a measure she had conquered fate; in a measure she had righted her life, had made a place for herself. She had blundered, she had made mistakes, she had suffered, but it was through all these things that she had developed. When she had broken away so blindly from her old life she had been guided by an instinct of self-preservation, and she had saved herself. She was a woman now, and a better, stronger woman than she would ever have been but for the course she had taken. Mrs. Saunders would think scorn of her present position, but now she had come to know that Mrs. Saunders understood only her own small world. A house in a certain locality, a dressmaker and tailor of certain standing; proper liveries, and rigid social lines were more to her than any consideration of soul or of the eternal heights. And how blindly in her immaturity she had fought against these limitations. Later,

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she had descended to the depth of hating Mrs. Saunders; of wishing her evil; but now as she thought she seemed to be lifted above that. At the best, life was not so joyful a thing that one need wish another even a momentary evil. It is difficult to be forgiving when you are down in the ditch, and see your enemy on the greensward above you; but once you, yourself, have attained to the greensward, it is easier to endure the company of your enemy. She had attained to the greensward, and the past was taking its true perspective, and she had begun actually to pity her cousin.

Also, the time had come when she could write to her father, send him a confession; tell him of all that she had done since opening her little shop, and ask him to forgive her that she had not told him before. Only success could have proved the wisdom of her venture, and she had waited for that. Ask his forgiveness, and tell him how she longed to come home, and had longed all her life. She would write this just before she left, and ask that the answer be sent to New York. There was a little exultation in the throbbing of her blood as she thought, and an excitement as to the answer that her letter would bring. Of course he would forgive her, and after a time he would allow her to help him. For a little while this vision had left her, but now again it was with her, giving point and compensation to her life.

Going back to New York. How different life would look; how her relative values would have changed, and her understanding of things; she felt herself quite an old woman now.

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“And I will meet you here, at this very spot, on the evening of the second of September,” Ned Beaton said as he stood with Jane on the railway platform. “Remember that, and I pin you down because I am almost afraid to let you out of my sight, now that you are out of debt.”

“Am I not making a fortune?” Jane asked. “Am I not yet masculine enough to be held by money?”

“And is that all? Do you not love us a little bit?”

“When one is training down to be as hard as nails, love is left out of the diet, is it not?”

“You so often quote me to my own detriment.”

“Which proves that I always remember what you say. Good-by. You have been very good to me, and behind the ‘nails’ I appreciate it deeply. Good-by,” and as long as she could see, he stood where she had left him on the platform.

## XXVII

“ I count life just a stuff  
To try the soul's strength on.”

THERE was a more flaring, glaring hotel farther down the river on the cliffs that faced the sea, but Jane remembered from her childhood that the smaller hotel was considered the better. Mrs. Kennet used always to be at this smaller hotel, and old Mr. De-Long, and she thought that she would like to see them once more, if only from a distance. And they were there, but as yet she had not come near them. Possibly they would not remember her. If they should meet casually and they did remember, it would be well; if not, it would be just as well. She had come, not for rest, but because of restlessness.

Her little sense of triumph had died in New York, and its place had been taken by an irresistible sadness. She had gone to Mrs. Saunders's dressmaker, who had been quite a moment in recognizing her, and then, while getting some garments that would permit her to go to the seaside, she heard some things that she could not understand, that puzzled her; but she waited until she was properly clothed before she went near the house. She was sure that Simmons would be there, and she must look prosperous before Simmons saw her. And the old man had been glad, and had let her wander at

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will over the house, at the last standing before her as she sat in the drawing-room, telling her of the various changes.

Colby was in Europe, of course, and there was no telling when Mrs. Saunders would come back ; and Mr. Saunders, Miss Jane would scarcely know him. Joseph had gone ; dismissed. It was Colby's fault, telling Mrs. Saunders of what Joseph had said about the time when Mr. Witting had come so often in the mornings—"The winter ye was goin' to your classes, Miss Jane," he explained, "when me an' Joseph was carryin' your books. Mr. Witting did use to come, but not so often, after all, an' that was all dead an' gone, an' what use had Colby to dig it up again?"—so Joseph had been dismissed.

Things had seemed to waver a little before Jane's eyes, for this had come strangely on top the gossip the dressmaker had let fall, but she steadied herself and said, gently: "That could not have been the reason of his dismissal, Simmons, for everyone knew that Mr. Witting came to the house." Then Simmons had answered, slowly: "Yes, Miss," and had changed the subject, saying that the doll-house had been sent to the Orphan Asylum.

Some strange thoughts had come with her from the house, thoughts that she found hard to dismiss. New York was not helping her, she had decided, and as soon as her business and her clothes were finished, she had come away. She had gone about to one or two places that she remembered, but she could not bring herself to go to Hillside Springs. Old Mrs. Creswick would

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be there. No, that would not be possible; and she took her way to this seaside place that she remembered as a child.

Horribly restless and as lonely, she had not realized what the old things and places meant until she had come back to them; but now her time was up; the next day she must leave, must go back to Newtown. Down through all the far hills and mountains, through all the dim wildernesses, to where Beaton, with his watchful eyes and amused smile, was waiting for her on the platform. Once more at work, all these idle suspicions would be driven from her mind—all these saddening memories would go to sleep again, and her ambitions would wake up once more, and once more she would think of herself as a success. The little tiny bit of a success, that had to go to a country town to find a level that was sufficiently low to throw it up as a height. The big dog of a small kennel. Ambition, yes, and aggressive staying power, that was what men had—women had endurance. Women were ambitious, too, but not ambitious enough, it seemed. A little success, a little praise satisfied them; then they wanted rest and comfort. At least that was the rule; and she herself was tired, very tired. How Beaton would laugh if he could read her thoughts; and if he were near her he could have read them; his eyes were so keen, and he had studied women, had had occasion to study women, and he was sorry for them, for their useless struggles. And well he might be. Through all the ages they had been trained to be seductive, so that at last they loved seductive things, illusive things, beautiful things.

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Out in the dim twilight of the deep piazza she sat withdrawn on this last evening of her holiday. Through the wide-open windows she could watch the dancing, hear the music. Up the dim reaches of the river the shadows deepened, the lights twinkled here and there, the young moon hung in the sky. Illusive things, beautiful things, and the music that was floating about her seemed to whisper that this was her place, here in these surroundings was where she belonged; no, she had not realized how much such things meant until she had come back to them. It was not strange that after awhile people worshipped money, worshipped their social gods. The soft movement of gliding feet, flowers and fair draperies, rippling laughter and watching eyes, the cry of the violins, the throb of the harps. And after this the sob of the wind through the wilderness, the beat of the rain among the everlasting hills! Work, and when she was old—money!

There was a pause; the dancers sat down and voices on the inside of the window became audible. Mrs. Kennet it was, and her incisive treble came clearly to Jane's ears.

"His grandmother is just dead, you know," she was saying, "killed, I think, by a return of her great wealth because of some resuscitated mines. I don't know very much about the details, but I do know that she is richer than she ever was, and she was sinfully rich at one time. Of course it has all come to him, and he is singing to-night simply to fulfil his engagement; fine, is it not? The proprietor had advertised him, you see, and as the man had stood by him when he was down, he now

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stands by the man. But when I think of what he has gone through it makes my blood boil ; and I do not see how she did it, I cannot imagine how she achieved it. I've known her all her life, and she is made of steel and stone, still I do not know how she accomplished it, how she squeezed all the life, and soul, and ambition out of him as she seems to have done. It will be a long story for you, as you've been out of the country, and of course I don't want to mention names in a crowd like this. She, you know, adopted a child, a cousin, a gentle creature, and I waited to see the little thing die of nervous prostration, or, surviving that, go into a lunatic asylum just as soon as she was old enough to realize things. She did neither, as it happened, and I will tell you why. He, you know, who is going to sing, and the other man whom you met travelling with them in Europe, went a great deal to the house, and of course people thought that it was on account of the girl ; it seemed to develop, however, that the other man was paying more attention to the elder woman. People laughed, I among them, for it was such a new departure for her, but it proves that a woman is never too old to be a fool, and since then I have heard strange things. This fellow, however, who is going to sing, was in love with the girl. He was rich and a gentleman, and the usual ruck of anxious mothers were watching him, so that a good deal was said and contradicted, and said over again. Suddenly, just as things seemed to be culminating, the girl ran away. That is what happened when she realized things, and that is the plain English of it, though it was explained differently.



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But she did, absolutely and actually, she ran away and was lost, apparently. Then what followed? Immediately, instantly, another girl popped up in her place; her sister, not as pretty, not as attractive, but sufficient for all purposes. The world heard that there were ten or twenty daughters, more or less, in this remarkable family, and that each must have a glimpse of the world. At the same time, the two lovers of the elder sister were carefully held on to as friends of the family, the poor lover as well as the rich. It looked well, you know, to have two followers. At the end of the second girl's first season it was announced that she was engaged to the rich lover, then she was whisked off to Europe. Now comes the tragedy." And Mrs. Kennet beat on the arm of her chair with her fan. "The poor fellow who is going to sing changed so that his best friends did not recognize him; and knowing not one thing about business, he began to play with his fortune. People scarcely realized at first what he was doing, and did not fully comprehend until the crash came. Everyone did everything they could then, but then it was too late; he was ruined, absolutely ruined. It nearly killed his grandmother, especially as he would not take a cent from her; the mines had not come in then and she had not much, so he would not take a cent and turned in to make his living as a singer, a choir and concert singer; but before he did that he borrowed money and bolted off to Europe. He came of solid, sane people, so I knew that he was not crazy; he went to give the girl her freedom; see? He had never loved the second girl; see? The next thing that I heard was, that the en-

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gement was off, that the girl had discovered that she loved the poor lover; the poor lover who had been talked about in connection with the elder woman, but who, I am sure, loved the elder girl. There is a mystery there, a mystery as to what hold the elder woman had over that poor fellow, a mystery that your story does not quite clear up. A little side light came to me through a servant, which is a disgraceful acknowledgment, but I was hiring him and had to ask him why he had left the lady in question. He answered quite promptly that it was because he had spoken of how she had received this young man in the morning when she had sent the young lady off to classes. I was so pleased with my side light that I hired him at once, and an excellent servant he is. But I assure you, my dear, that when all this came to my ears—that the engagement was off—that the girl had discovered that she loved the other man and had been announced as the heiress of the elder woman, I roared with laughter—laughed aloud; for then I understood why this young man who is going to sing threw away his money; threw it away just as surely as if he had poked it into the fire; had thrown it away because he did not know what poverty meant, and because that was the only method by which he could escape from marriage with a woman he did not love, being, at the same time, too much of a gentleman to jilt her. It is very trying to marry where you do not love, you know; but to marry one sister while you love the other sister, as he surely did, is more trying still. At least he did not seem able to face the situation, preferring to face poverty. Two ills of which he

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knew nothing, he chose that which seemed the least. All this is clear enough; what is not clear, is how that woman managed to kill all his spirit, how she made him so hopeless, took all the life out of him, quenched him so entirely. I've always known her to be a clever woman, a dangerous woman, and I can understand his sacrificing a fortune as he did to get away from her; but this last thing that you tell me is stranger than all, and puzzles me; I wish you'd say it over again."

"Why," a strange voice answered, "when first we met them, the elder woman looked well and the girl unhappy; and the man whom you speak of as the poor lover seemed extremely careless in his manners; suddenly his old aunt died, and, as you know, cut him off with only about ten or fifteen thousand dollars—I forget which—just then we left and went to Paris. We had not been there a week, when my husband met him on the street, and suggested the club, but he said no, that he had given up all clubs, and had gone to work. My husband exclaimed, 'Why, you came into a lump just the other day.' He laughed and answered, 'Yes, and I used it up at once paying 'Glad life's arrears.' Which, I suppose, meant his debts."

"Yes; and then?"

"Why, we met the elder woman and the girl again very soon, and they had changed places in the matter of looks; the girl looked happier than I'd ever seen her, and the elder woman looked twenty years older. She at once told us that the engagement was off—mutual consent," she explained.

"It's the strangest thing I've ever heard," Mrs. Ken-

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net said, slowly, "and I shall have to take all I know about it to pieces and try to match it all together again; but what is her power? how did she get such a hold? how did she manage them so? I can understand how anyone would sacrifice anything and everything to get away from Jane Saunders—" The speaker stopped short, and looked over her shoulder as if startled. "Someone sighed," she said; "sighed directly in my ear—positively!"

"The wind stirred the curtain."

"Excuse me; curtains do not sigh, even in a hurricane. Just as I mentioned a name, too; and I've been so careful about that."

"In such a buzz of talk no one could have heard you. But here he comes, and since your explanation, I am wild to hear him sing."

Jane had no need to look in, to raise her head from where it leaned against the wall, in order to see the hero of the story. She knew who it was that had been making his living by singing at summer resorts, whose mellow voice it was that hushed the hum of talk. "To get away from Jane Saunders." The words seemed to stand out before her; not for one moment did she doubt them; it was all too plain, too cruelly plain. And the other one? How clearly she remembered—he had compromised his debts—he had accepted money from a source he despised! She tried to stop thinking; the next step would almost overthrow her faith in her kind. He had used his legacy in paying "Glad life's arrears"! The universe seemed to pause for a moment. Joseph's testimony loomed up next. She could

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have cried aloud—if only she could implore Mrs. Saunders to contradict it all. Hard she had been, unsympathetic, yes, but not wicked—no—no! She would put it out of her life; she would not believe it; servant's talk; disgraceful, indeed. She would forget it; it seemed to have soiled her whole being, her very soul! Thank God! oh, thank God! she had gone away. And she had loved that man; but yet he had paid the debts that had held him, "Glad life's arrears," she could hear him say it. And that childish glamour had been revealed to Laurence Creswick, of course; and she had found the thread to the maze. Of course! and all along he had loved her.

The song had ceased, and once more the talk buzzed up, and once more Mrs. Kennet's voice came to her ears.

"He has seen me, poor fellow, and is coming to speak to me. I'll introduce him."

Then, not a foot away from her, Laurence Creswick took his seat on the window-sill; seated himself so that but for the darkness he would have looked straight into her eyes. She dared not move away. He was looking out now—he must see her!

A man pausing to light a cigarette, struck a match. She felt as if the skies had opened and the glare of heaven was shining on her face. She was conscious that Creswick had risen suddenly to his feet, and as suddenly had sat down again. It was over in a second, and she heard Mrs. Kennet say: "Saw a ghost? I believe that window is haunted. I heard a sigh there just as you began to sing—a distinct sigh."

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"It is haunted by a draught," her friend rejoined; "and now, if Mr. Creswick is not to sing again, I shall say good-night. So glad to have met you, Mr. Creswick. You coming, too, Mrs. Kennet?"

"Think I shall, it grows late, and the music'll soon stop now. The management is awfully stingy with the music—awfully stingy. Good-night, Laurence."

There was a scraping of chairs on the waxed floor, a moment's pause, then Laurence Creswick stepped out over the low sill and stood beside her.

"Jane!" he whispered under his breath, "Jane?"

Perhaps he was blinded, coming out from the light; perhaps he had forgotten Mrs. Saunders's talk, set to the mad clamor of the street-organ; perhaps he had forgotten Marion. Perhaps he had forgotten all this, else he would not have stepped out of the window, have bent so low over the woman sitting shrouded in the shadows.

"Jane?"

She swept her white draperies aside from the bench that he might sit down, then, in a carefully level voice, that would have done credit to Mrs. Saunders herself, she said: "I am so glad to see you, Mr. Creswick, and of course you are surprised to see me here. Take it all in all, I am a little bit surprised myself."

"Of course."

"I am here on a holiday," she went on, "given me by my firm in return for one year's meritorious service." She laughed a little. Creswick sat quite still, and the laughter, that had a strange sound, died away.

"You do not understand about my firm," Jane be-

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gan again. "I have kept that quite a secret until just before I left Newtown."

"Newtown?" Creswick repeated.

"Yes, that is where I live." Her words were beginning to crowd each other now, were becoming a little breathless. "You left me in a milliner's shop," she went on. "You were awfully good about that, and, thanks to you, I made the shop pay, actually pay—I cleared fifteen dollars! Don't laugh, don't even smile, thinking that I cannot see you out here in the dark, for that fifteen dollars was the corner-stone of my fortune. Mr. Beaton, who owns the greater part of Newtown, watched my brilliant career, and when he wanted a head for his department shop in Newtown he offered me the position on a rising salary, which I declined. Do not you congratulate me on my enormous advance in self-confidence?" She paused abruptly, perhaps to catch her breath, but Creswick did not answer. He was leaning back, and even in the darkness it could be seen that his white face was turned toward the far, unseeable reaches of the river.

"I declined," Jane went on, "because I wanted to be a member of the company, and I succeeded. They hesitated over a woman, but I pledged myself to them in perpetuity, so to speak. Promised to be manly, to become as hard as nails, and have given satisfaction."

Still Creswick did not speak, did not move.

"You remember we talked about it once, long ago? About women making livings and not fortunes? I shall make a fortune. I think it very satisfactory, do not you? And so, after a year of unbroken work, they

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presented me with two weeks' holiday. I went first to New York, and, as a relaxation from working like a man, I hunted up my old dressmaker and bought clothes like a woman. She wanted me to wait until she came back from Europe with the autumn styles. Think of the autumn styles in Newtown! I saw old Simmons, too, went to the house and had a long talk with the old fellow, a long, long talk. He was the first creature I had met that belonged to my past life, and he seemed an old friend. And I made the old man stand aside so that I could shut the front door myself, and I told him quite frankly why I did it. That I wanted to hear the latch click as it had clicked that fateful morning when I ran away; that cold, gray, dismal autumn morning when I took my life into my own hands, to end in pledging it to the Newtown Land Company."

There was another pause, when someone sighed, a sigh with a catch in it; then once more, quickly, Jane took up her story:

"It is a good investment," she said, "at least—well, the flies and the mosquitoes were worrying me so, and it was so hot."

"When did you go to Newtown?" Creswick had turned to look at Jane. "When was it?"

"In June—yes, it was June," she paused a second, "June a year ago. It is very hot in Stony Ridge in June, very hot." Then, in a lower voice, hesitating a little, she went on: "A strange thought came to me," she said, "when I made Simmons let me shut the door. At each crisis of my life I have had a door



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to shut, a door that seemed to separate me forever from what had gone before. The first, I was a little child playing in the nursery with my brother Jim and—Marion—and outside it was raining. Mawm Elsie was rocking the baby to sleep in a big chair that creaked and groaned, and the fire burned red and warm, and struck up against the ceiling. And a lion was coming after us, me and Jim, and we were trying so hard to reach the trundle-bed. The door opened; mother came in. Her face looked so small and white, I think she must have been sorry, and she took us down to Cousin Henry. I shut the door, you see, that was the first door. When I ran away I shut the door again, and the latch clicked so clear, so loud, I can hear it still. And I shut the shop door, the little shop door, and the lock was rusty." She cleared her throat and straightened up. "And each time," she went on, "I have gone into a new life in equal blindness, and each time it has been more irrevocable than the time before."

Creswick had turned away again, had leaned forward, resting his forearms on his knees, his hands clasped together loosely, and his head drooped over them.

"And now," and Jane drooped a little as if with weariness, "now I seem to be peeping through the key-holes of the doors, being allowed to catch little glimpses of what I have left behind, what I was driven away from——"

Creswick turned his head slightly. "Driven away?"

"Yes, by many things; it was not all wilful flight,"

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and she sighed. "The dressmaker, you know, was a part of one picture, and the talk with old Simmons. Then coming here to rest gave me another glimpse of the same picture; the dancing, the music, my wearing of fine raiment, the food——"

"You have never been in need, Jane?" Creswick interrupted, quickly.

"Never in need."

There was a moment's silence, when Creswick again drooped his head as if gazing on the floor, then Jane went on:

"And sitting here I've heard Mrs. Kennet talking, talking, talking the old talk of the world I used to know; giving me another view through the key-hole. Tearing people to pieces, and the longer she had known them, the smaller were the pieces to which she reduced them. She was talking of Mrs. Saunders—of me—" Jane paused, but Creswick did not move. "She gave me some new lights; she put together some puzzles; made plain some things about, about—Simmons had just hinted at." Again she stopped, but Creswick did not move, did not speak.

"And this winter," Jane went on, "I shall see a picture I have much longed for, I shall go home. I shall go back to the old nursery, shall sit in the old chair, shall see the fire burn red and warm, shall hunt for the lost delights of my childhood. I shall go back to the time, the little time of my life when I was happy. I could build a fire just like the fire I left that night; I would know the trundle-beds among a million, and if I could go into Paradise I could put my hand on

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Jim among all the little angels. I can hear Marion's cries until she got my doll and chair; I can see the lion's red eyes gleaming in the corner; I can hear the door-latch turn. I can feel the big emptiness of Mrs. Saunders's house; I can feel my heart, my little child's heart breaking day by day. I have never told before, save once—once I told her that I hated her, once. Now I am sorry for her; now I am free of her, and the world is wide. I have been deceived; I have blundered, and blunders are punished like sins; I have made mistakes, but I have learned that life must be lived, and to live it to any effect we must live it calmly. I have learned to rise above hatred; I have learned not to despair."

"I hate Mrs. Saunders." Creswick's voice was very quiet. "Whether she told me truth or not, I hate her."

Then nothing was heard save the boom of the sea that seemed to come nearer and nearer. Long ago the young moon had set, the music had ceased. Up and down the river the lights had gone out one by one; the sounds of life were fading, and a wringing wet mist was creeping up from the sea. Very still, while the mist wrapped them round, drenching Jane's draperies until they clung to her; beading all the ripples of her hair; resting like tears on their cheeks. At last she rose, holding out her hand. "Good-by," she said, "I go in the morning."

Creswick rose. "Good-by?" he repeated. "No," and he came very close to her. "No, there is one more door to be closed," he went on quietly, "and

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my hand is on the latch, not yours this time, but mine. I shall close the door of the Newtown Land Company; I shall buy it out if necessary. For a little while I lost faith in you, and I went down into Hell. Now, now," and he put his hands on the two sides of her face and lifted it up, "Now I shall not ask you; I shall close the door and take you away—you will come with me, Jane?"













